THE LITTLE HILL FARM

or

CRUISINGS IN OLD SCHOHARIE

OUR HOUSE UNDER THE HILL

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or

CRUISINGS IN OLD SCHOHARIE

by

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Nature Cruisings
Cruising Cross Country
Cruising Around a Changing World
The Little Corner Never Conquered

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To all the folks in the old county of Schoharie, Catholics, Protestants and Jews, Republicans, Democrats and Socialists, white and colored, motorists and trampers—and if there be any others impossible to classify, them also I include—to all I dedicate this book with gratitude for what they are teaching me.

PREFACE

Early in September, 1930, while at the farm on my vacation, I received a letter from the Manager of the Universalist Publishing House, saying that after reading "All Kinds of Wood for the Fire" he felt more convinced than ever that we ought to make another volume for the "Cruising" series, and call it "The Little Hill Farm." At once I set to work. No bit of editorial work has pleased me so much in a long time as the task of going over these chapters and preparing them for publication. Usually when literary work gets cold it is hard reading for the author. However, there is so much fine enjoyment connected with life at the Little Hill Farm that, cold or hot, the chapters bring up healing and strengthening memories. All the author hopes for them is that they may start the mental operations in those who chance to read them that will bring up for them the pictures of their own hills and hollows and recall their own experiences of contentment.

For numerous correspondents I have had to answer the question, "Is this little farm an ancestral home?" It is not. Only three places that I know of have been associated with my direct ancestors of my name since they came from Holland about 1650: a farm on Hop Brook not far from Red Bank, Monmouth County, New Jersey, a farm near Sharon, New York, which has been in the family since 1795, and the Grand Street house in Cobleskill, where my father and mother moved soon after their marriage in 1871, and which by all the children of their family, from Boston to Manila, is still regarded as the old home.

John van Schaick, Jr.

Boston, November 20, 1930.

BY WAY OF INTRODUCTION

Scenery may be too fine or too grand and imposing for one's daily and hourly view. It tires after a while. It demands a mood that comes to you only at intervals. Hence it is never wise to build your house on the most ambitious spot in the landscape. Rather seek out a more humble or secluded nook or corner which you can fill and warm with your domestic and home instincts and affections. In some things the half is often more satisfying than the whole. A glimpse of the Hudson River between hills or through openings in the trees wears better with me than a long expanse of it constantly spread out before me.

One day I had an errand to a farmhouse nestled in a little valley or basin at the foot of a mountain. The earth put out protecting arms all about it—a low hill with an orchard on one side, a sloping pasture on another, and the mountain with the skirts of its mantling forests close at hand in the rear. How my heart warmed toward it! I had so long been perched on the banks of a great river in sight of all the world, exposed to every wind that blows, with a horizon line that sweeps over half a county, that, quite unconsciously to myself, I was pining for a nook to sit down in. I was hungry for the private and the circumscribed. I knew it when I saw this sheltered farmstead.

I had long been restless and dissatisfied—a vague kind of homesickness; now I knew the remedy. Hence, when, not long afterward, I was offered a tract of wild land barely a mile from home, that contained a secluded nook and a few acres af level fertile land shut off from the vain noisy world of railroads, steamboats and yachts by a wooded, precipitous mountain, I quickly closed the bargain and built me a rustic house there which I call Slabsides.

From "Far and Near," by John Burroughs.

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THE LITTLE HILL FARM

CHAPTER I

REST AT THE FARM

TO be in the United States nearly all summer and not go near the Little Hill Farm* at all was an exceptional experience. What made it worse was that in Boston we were only one night away. Such a summer of sunshine, too. Never again, we vowed, would we stay away so long. Nothing less than the width of continents or oceans or complete financial prostration must be permitted to so separate us from the place. And yet we can not say that the little hill farm did not render us continual service all through the hot summer. The fact that it was there was a steadying and calming thought. The vision of the hills, woods and steep pastures, the sound of Stony Creek singing night and day, the little tinkle of Pasture Brook behind the barn, came to us in the heat of Boston and on our week end excursions. We went to many more famous places during the summer, in New England and Canada, but nothing quite took its place.

There were no self-reproaches for forgetting the trim villages and lovely hills of my native state and country. Only with life slipping away so fast a question would rise now and then as to whether it was not a mistaken sense of duty which kept one away so long.

When Labor Day dawned we started, little

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*Situated in the town of Summit, Schoharie County, New York, in a hollow of the northern Catskills, at an elevation of 1,500 feet, and surrounded by ridges and hills of from 2,000 to 2,300 feet.

realizing that we were in for one of the hottest days of the summer. What with smoke and cinders, rattle and roar, jerk and bang, added to the heat, it was not one of our best trips. Still it was interesting to travel through the Berkshires once more by daylight. In every little river, pond and mountain pool people were bathing. Along the roads were picnic parties in the shade of trees or bushes. The motor roads were crowded with people out for the day or going home from vacation. Whenever I am tempted to say that we have too many holidays, I think of some of these family parties who have only Sundays and holidays for outings together. The happy faces of boys and girls "hiking," swimming, wading, lunching, playing ball, told us again that discomfort from heat is largely mental.

Going against the stream of travel, we had plenty of room. We ran to make a connection in Albany, illogically taking the local instead of the express, gaining little time but saving the wait of an hour in a crowded station, and traveling by a more intimate, friendly, neighborhood type of train, with people coming and going, scraps of conversation coming in from every station platform, and a gray-haired conductor who knew everybody. He looked like a Presbyterian elder, but when he said it was "hot as h—l wherever the sun hit in" I knew he was no elder. There were eleven or twelve stops in forty-five miles, but there were goldenrod, or evening primroses, or buttercups and asters just outside our window at practically every station. Sometimes we stopped in the shade of a noble elm or maple. From every platform on the line there was something to see—the line of Helderbergs, the plain stretching away to Schenectady, a prosperous farm, an attractive village street, or the higher hills of Schoharie County.

A night in Cobleskill, the largest village of the

AS WE DRIVE IN

county, a morning marketing and shopping, a few practise drives with a new car my brother had bought to get my hand in, and we were off—up the main state road four miles to our turn, up the dirt road into the hills three miles to the very end of the valley. Those who pass our house do it at an angle approaching forty-five degrees. Perhaps an engineer might call it considerably less, but on the other hand I have known unfortunate motorists to call it considerably more.

So often have we stocked up for such a trip, that we had about everything we needed. We had no dressing for the salad, but it was so fresh it needed none. The kitchen stove went to work as if it were used to it every day, and drew so merrily that the oil stove, after smoking disagreeably, fell to also, burning with a beautiful blue flame. On the first night we usually light everything up so as to see what will work and what will not.

But we missed something. After supper, sitting out on the porch to feel the cool breath of the coming night, we discovered what it was. Stony Creek was silent. There was not even a gurgle. In all the fifteen years that we have known the farm this has never happened before. Every one agrees that it has been the dryest summer in years. The leaves on the trees were thick and green, the forest-covered hills looked fresh and beautiful, but on our first walk we saw the effects of drought. There was a great scarcity of flowers. Many were dried on the stems. Berries were dried up on the bushes. The goldenrod was drooping and dying. Leaves of even tough weeds were curled up. Boggy places in the meadows were firm and hard. Many of the springs were dry. Farmers' wells were dry too.

We walked down Pasture Brook and up Stony Creek in the middle of the creek beds to find a few

flowers for the table, seeing from the inside the dense thickets which we had never explored, and finding white and purple asters blooming luxuriantly where the pitiless sun could not reach them. With these, Queen Anne's lace, goldenrod, buttercups and dried grasses the Madame made the rooms beautiful. We try always to pick our flowers only from the list that "may be picked freely," and we treat those that "may be picked sparingly" precisely like those that "may not be picked at all without danger of extermination." We always take with us the list of the Wild Flower Preservation Society.

Though not a drop of water was flowing through the farm, we followed Stony Creek up until we found a few deep pools and in one place a slight trickle of water coming over the rocks. Here we found survivors of the little trout with which public-spirited citizens working with the state have restocked the stream. The trout were from two to four inches long—beautiful little fellows, doomed to die unless rain came soon.

Up in the woods on a neighbor's farm there is a famous cold spring with water always 48 degrees F. This spring we found comparatively unaffected by the long drought. The only swampy land around was along the course of the rivulet that issues from it. Ferns and other plants that love water were growing thick and luxuriant.

Another vein of water too deep to be affected is the artesian well by our back door. This dry summer is the greatest test it has ever had. Cold, pure, life-giving, it flows just as steadily as ever. No summer of continued rain ever made it flow faster. The blasting drought has not made it flow slower. Like men or trees whose roots are deep, this vein of water is not much affected by things on the surface.

George, our neighbor, told us it was the worst drought he had ever known. A friend "down on the flats" sowed twenty bushels of oats and threshed only seventy. "He ought to have had three hundred," said George. Another sowed thirty and got seventy-five. For fifty-three years the weather records in New York show that August is one of our wettest months. The rain fall has averaged four and a half inches. This year we have had only 1.45 inches. Reservoirs which supply the cities and villages of New York state are getting low. Some have reached the danger point. "Hot days like Labor Day," the *New York World* remarked, "are nature's little jokes. She delights to insert a bud-swelling thaw in January and to fill the April tulips with snow." She likes to surprise people on Labor Day or even later when they think summer is gone. These surprises are the things that city people exclaim over, but the country people have a truer sense of the realities of the situation and they talk about the drought.

In the railroad station at Cobleskill where I had gone to write a telegram I overheard a conversation between the conductor of the "branch train" and the station agent. "The water here" (pumped from the creek), said the conductor, "is so dirty that we can hardly make steam with it. Coming out of Cherry Valley yesterday it just foamed up in the boiler and didn't give us any head. We had to use borax and lost ten or twelve minutes on the grade. We'll have to run a hose to a well and get one tank of water up there to mix with a tank down here."

In communities where people have had all the water they want simply by turning a faucet and who now find their supply curtailed or cut off, there is a new realization of what a good water supply means to man.

Life is harder because of the extremes of weather,

but it is much less monotonous. The drought is a great teacher.

Not only have we missed the music of the brooks and our usual abundance of wild flowers and berries, we also have missed the birds. A friend summering in a beautiful valley of northern Pennsylvania wrote us September 2, "My bird concerts have given way to crickets and katys, a change which makes a lump in my throat."

We did not feel quite that way about it. Every night as we sat out we talked about our orchestra—crickets sawing away for dear life, and tree toads chiming in. The locusts worked only on the day shift.

Not all the birds have gone, but the intense heat has driven them into the cool recesses of the hills. The great northern pileated passed near. George saw him and told us, but up to the present writing we have only heard him in the distance. The cry of a jay came down from the upper pasture now and then. On little walks we also heard his soft bell note. The crows made a noisy clamor every little while. The phoebe was fly-catching farther afield than usual. We also saw her little kinsman, the wood peewee, and often we had the love song of the black-capped chickadee. Just at nightfall we saw a flock of eight or ten robins, why in a flock we could not tell. We heard the bluebird, caught one fleeting glimpse of the catbird and had a few song and field sparrows about. The Madame saw the yellow-bellied sapsucker on a pear tree and I saw the Maryland yellow-throat under a raspberry bush. From up the creek we heard a strange note, often repeated, which sounded like a water bird. We wondered if a stray heron might be catching the last of the trout. We had a young bird with a big nose, as one of the children once described a grosbeak, and thought it might be the young rose-

breast. A pigeon hawk flew around and around above us, fluttering his wings every moment or so and uttering his cry, unlike that of any other hawk. And a much larger hawk, fully as large as the red-tailed or red-shouldered, soared above the slopes of Cobble Mountain. Up in the high pastures, now growing up to young trees, I scared up a family of goldfinches, all in winter plumage. They let me come up close after they had lighted, and they were a beautiful picture swaying on thistles and other seed-bearing weeds, the sun striking full on their brilliant green color.

At the farm we have to work harder in order to live, but we get the most complete rest. To have a fire we chop kindling and carry heavy armfuls of wood. To have water we take down the heavy bucket which catches the continual drip of our artesian well and carry it to the house. To have ice we haul it from Cobleskill in our automobile and stagger with it to the ice box, after having toured the village to find the ice man, busy with his deliveries. To have fresh fruit we pick it ourselves. To have light for the night time we clean and fill lamps with oil and fasten candles in candlesticks. To have it sweet and clean about us we sweep and dust. To have peace from the hornets and wasps which live in the attics we arm ourselves and drive them out. To have hot dinners or cold salads for lunch we put things together and use our imaginations and call on all the cooking experience we have had. All this is labor, but it also is rest. In an age where we live by pushing buttons and commanding the services of huge combinations of people, for people who live in cities life at a little hill farm brings a change in living conditions so revolutionary that it completely takes one out of himself. It seems to stir the deeply hidden nerve cells in which are racial memories of the days when men lived close

to the soil, and survived only by their strength, resourcefulness and skill.

There are other ways in which the change has been complete. Between Tuesday and the Sunday on which these words are written we saw only eight vehicles go by. Undoubtedly others went by when we were afield, but they did not go by for us. Going up the steep hill we saw a motor truck carrying empty milk cans, another truck with building material and a motor car with a single man in it. Coming down we saw a two-horse team with a load of sawdust for a farmer's ice house and a gentle old horse carrying his owner to Cobleskill.

Nothing that we did was more restful than getting work started. Full fifteen years have passed since we had had the buildings painted. That was begun. A roof was put on. Cellar walls were examined and orders given to re-lay. Ditching was planned to carry water away from the walls in the future. "Jack Frost is a great heaver," said the old veteran who looked things over for us. "Give him a little water near a wall and he'll put it out every time." The man once found to fix the walls, we discovered he could fix the chimneys. Instead of patching chimneys, why not bring them down from the attics into the lower rooms and reduce our insurance premiums? So it was ordered. The man being there, why not lay that long deferred chimney for a fireplace? It seemed economy to do it. And if the mixer and men were on the spot why not make that much needed side porch of concrete? It would be another saving.

Thus thriftily we made our plans and felt we had made a great saving. But the bills are not yet in.

September 8, 1929.

CHAPTER II

RAINY DAYS AT THE FARM

AFTER three days of tiny showers and little sprinkles that hardly laid the dust under the trees, the blessed rain came at last. Just one week after our sizzling Labor Day it began at five o'clock in the morning. By eight o'clock it was coming down steadily, and by ten o'clock things were dripping.

We took our share of credit as rain-makers, for just as soon as we had given orders to paint all the farm buildings, and put on one new roof, the rain started. But we shall be happy to have the painting and roofing held up, if only the little trout can be saved, and the wells and springs and streams can be filled before winter sets in. The roofing is safe in the dry half of the big barn, the paint is locked up in the wagon-house—white and green for the house, red and white for the other buildings. Let the rain come. It can not affect our new paint.

The morning of the rain was the morning for the stoves to "act up." The kitchen range did a famous job of smoking. It had exhibited tendencies that way ever since we arrived, but we had humored it and nursed it and induced it to draw. Now it absolutely refused to be cajoled any longer. So we turned to the oil stove, which to our dismay came down with a sudden case of dirt in the pipes, and no oil stove wire or poker on the premises to clean it out. Between the two of them it was 6.30 a. m. before we sat down to eat. But all turned out well. A man who had arrived to do roofing came in and helped diagnose the complaint of the range. There was

nothing in the pipe and nothing at the elbow in the attic, but when we took the pipe out of the chimney we found soot so deep that it almost covered the opening. Some time in the fifteen years that we have used it, the old chimney may have been cleaned out, but we have no record of it.

There are all kinds of rainy day jobs on a farm, even if little farming is carried on. There is wood to chop or carry. There is an old desk to clean out. There is a little used room to sweep. There are letters to answer, books to read, extra things to cook. The Madame tacked up interesting and beautiful pictures from the best of the Sunday supplements, and cleaned out our linen closet. If one is conservative in such matters and lets the linen closet alone for years, the old newspapers on the shelves afford interesting reading. One may find a dramatic account of the battle of Jutland or the entry of the United States into the World War. Thus one is encouraged to mix literature with grubbing, which is what was intended from before the foundations of the earth.

We had to celebrate our first rainy day with a rainy day luncheon—that is one which involves a little more care in preparation. As one of the important industries of Cobleskill is the manufacture of self-rising buckwheat flour, and as the head of the oldest of the four mills always presents us with his Gold Medal brand, and as we seldom have griddle-cakes anywhere else, we voted for buckwheat cakes and maple syrup. Here is where cooking genius has a chance. The jealous may carp, and cry, "Why, it's nothing to do, just mix water or milk with the flour and bake them," but I ask a discerning public: Is it nothing to build a real fire? Is it nothing to grease properly a griddle? Is it nothing to find the right kind of receptacle to mix in and pour from? Is it nothing to make batter just thick enough and just

thin enough? Is it nothing to pour out the right quantity, flop them over at the instant they reach a golden brown, and take them off when the back side says they are done? And is it nothing to make the griddle cook evenly and time things to be done all at once? Ah, there is an art in baking griddle-cakes. Pay no attention to those who cry pooh! They were a great success. But, as I explained to the Madame, a plateful of mangled ones, pale ones, burned ones, had been prepared purposely for the birds.

The generation of our grandmothers had no use for prepared buckwheat, which has a percentage of wheat flour mixed in, but we of to-day are entirely willing to tone down the strong flavor of the buckwheat.

Eating these cakes brings up visions of the buckwheat fields of which there are so many in Schoharie County. When buckwheat is in blossom, the breezes carry the sweet odors for miles. The bees make from it a beautiful dark honey with a distinct flavor which some people prefer to clover honey, the standard of excellence among the country folks. And when the blossoms have withered and the dirty-looking brownish grains have come, the red stalks of the buckwheat are a beautiful sight, and the red stubble when the crops have been harvested may be seen for a long distance.

The rainy day was the time for "Red Rump" to come back. "Red Rump" is our chipmunk, and we have not seen him for some time. But there he was on the cellar door close by the kitchen window where we were eating griddle-cakes. We had grain for him and put peanuts on our marketing list, so "Red Rump" will fare well if he will stand by.

The pear trees for which the little farm has been famous for many years seem to have been affected not at all by the drought. Standing below the house

on the last slope before the creek, they apparently have been able to find all the moisture that they need. There are a Bartlett, two or three seckels and an early pear, on one side yellow as butter and on the other red as a highly colored pippin. We never have paid much attention to these early ones, except to walk carefully under them when they are ripe, because of the black hornets which swarm about them, but this year we have used them.* Part of the advantage of a vacation of this kind is to have change in every way possible. So we have stewed these pears for dessert in place of the apricots and peaches we use so much in the city. Some of our friends tell us that it is desecration to cook beautiful fresh fruit, but as we do not object even mentally to their having it fresh, uncooked, we claim the right without apology to have it fresh cooked. A friend who is a great physician, who travels every year in countries outside the tourist belt, says he can always get "compote," or cooked fresh fruit, everywhere, and it solves one part of the health problem for him in places where sanitary conditions are not good. Traveling with him we have got in the way of using much cooked fruit, and have come to like it. So one rainy day task is to pare and quarter the pears and early apples and cook them. One lot of pears too sound and beautiful to touch with the knife we cooked whole, and they seemed to be even better than the others.

And lest we forget them let us bring in here the ever-bearing raspberries, on that same rich, well-watered slope. My lawyer brother wrote us to look for them, or we never should have dreamed of having raspberries when all the wild ones have been gone for weeks. But there they were—all we could use, and

*Finally identified by my brother and the New York State Experiment Station as the Tyson.

quantities more coming along. They are on "everbearing bushes" that this lawyer fisherman fruit-loving brother has set out in years past. One of the two best recreations of the Madame is to pick berries and arrange flowers. Usually at the farm she has full scope for both.

A good rainy day job is to dust, sort, and rearrange the books. Booksellers complain that too many people to-day have given up owning books. If they read at all they use public libraries or circulating libraries. If they go away they have the latest fiction sent up to be returned in a week or two. We probably are entitled to be called "book lovers." We own books. We carry them around with us. But we have discovered that the book that is read or consulted is the book that is at hand—not at the library, even if the library is only a block away, not at the office, even if the office is only downstairs. The book must be on the spot. That is why we permit ourselves to be a little extravagant in letting books go to the farm and in buying duplicates if needed. The book that is at hand may prove to be a veritable gold mine of pleasure.

For example, on this trip we picked up "My Story," by Hall Caine, the British novelist, published in 1909. Every night in our big sitting room, by the light of a large oil lamp, the Madame has read several chapters aloud, while her spouse has walked up and down or dropped comfortably on to the couch. We practically finished this book by each one getting at it occasionally alone. It is not only the story of how Hall Caine, a poor boy on the Isle of Man, got his foothold in literature, but it is the story of his most intimate friends, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, John Ruskin, Robert Buchanan, T. E. Brown, Wilkie Collins, and a most interesting discussion of "the literary life."

Up into the hills, far away from the turmoil of life, on long evenings when to some people the old farmhouse might seem lonely, a gifted man came to us and chatted with us on the most interesting themes, and the moment that we began to grow sleepy he quietly went away. He showed us the inside of a humble cottage on the Isle of Man, he told us about school days in Liverpool, his start as an architect's assistant, his self-education in literature, the fate that made him a friend of Rossetti, and how he came to write books like "The Manxman," "The Deemster," "The Scapegoat," "The Bondman." Always we were coming upon passages as interesting as this:

"If I have painted this little picture of our primitive patriarchal life in a remote parish of the Isle of Man as recently as fifty years ago (now seventy) it has not been merely for its own sake, but chiefly in order to say that poverty, if it is sweet and not bitter, is in my view a condition far more blessed of God than wealth, bringing human hearts closer together in mutual dependence and brotherhood. I think that is why the poor are so good to each other, and when I remember the intimacies of my own earlier days, both in my grandmother's house and my mother's, my rapturous joy in the possession of little things, I am almost sorry for my own children because they were born to a condition of life which I had worked so hard to make better than my own."

One of the great joys of this first rainy day was the coming to life of our beloved Stony Creek. The rain had let up earlier in the day, and toward night we walked down to the bridge. As we approached the stream we heard a slight musical gurgle or ripple. On the up-stream side of the bridge there were pools here and there in the stony bed of the stream, and a trickle of water between. On the down-stream side all was dry except for a pool made by the rain. But

as we stood there we had the great pleasure of seeing the water creep under the bridge, disappear in the gravel, reappear in the pool below, gradually cover the gravel, work its way around this big stone, then that one, and at last make a little flowing, rippling, connection between the pools above and the one below. We talked about the surprise and joy of the little fishes as the cold mountain water came down to them at last, bringing new life to the half-stagnant pools. We saw too many little bodies floating on the surface—trout and minnows, victims of the drought.

How much we make of this "dry spell," we said to one another. After all the country is green. The woods are turning lovely shades of red and yellow. The cattle may find the picking dry here and there, but still there is plenty of food. In the field across the road there is a fine growth of clover which has come up since haying. What do we know about a drought compared with those vast areas of India or China where every spear of grass is seized by famished men, and where not only the bodies of little fishes but the bodies of little children may be found at every turn! We have a goodly land, and if now and then we have to thresh fewer bushels to the acre, we must not complain too much about it—at least not until the tax list is posted.

In the *New York Times*, which comes regularly to the valley, we found to read this rainy day an interesting article: "Here the President Finds Calm." It contained not only a description of Rapidan Camp in the Blue Mountains of Virginia, but a statement of the philosophy back of the recreation which the President and thousands of our citizens every year seek. "In the transition from canvas to board," says the writer, "there has been no loss of simplicity, no confusion of values. . . . Trees he has in great abundance. Rough trunks of elm shoulder the smooth

silver bark of beech. Oaks have stood there a hundred years smiling at the frivolous dance of young white birches. There is no sound but the liquid gossip of Mill Prong and Laurel Prong babbling news at each other across a narrowing wedge of rock as they hurry to join hands in the historic dignity of Rapidan River. Possums live in the hills, deer track their shy and high-heeled way down to drink in the clear streams. The air is crisp and the sun lures pungent fragrance out of laurel and hemlock. It is a kind of camp which cries aloud for old clothes and stout boots, for blue veils of wood smoke drifting through the trees and the snap of frying bacon impertinent above the murmur of the streams."

Speaking of the hard physical labor in which the President and his friends join, the article says: "It seems to be the established theory of the camp that it is more fun to do things yourself than to have them done to or for you." Of the Hoovers' "dislike of extraneous and cluttering detail" it says: "All their lives they have been doing away with non-essentials in camps, from the Santa Clara foothills all the way to the Manchurian Mountains and on around the world. They have learned to achieve a simplicity that is neither stark nor uncomfortable, but invites to rest and the letting down of nervous strain."

Whether President or door keeper, minister or sexton, editor or printer's devil—blessed is that man or woman who early in life finds out how best to achieve poise and calm, and steadfastly goes about it. And in all the blessed fellowships of nature lovers, a special tie binds those who have discovered the peace and beauty of the hills.

September 10, 1929.

CHAPTER III

GOING DOWN TO STADJE

THE isolation of the little hill farm is one of its great charms, but that isolation is made more marked by frequent "trips to the village."

The country people speak of it as "going over to Richmondville," "up to Summit," or "down to Cobleskill." The first is two miles over the hill and five miles around, the second is two miles up the mountain, and the third is seven and four-tenths miles, three miles down our valley and then along the beautiful state road for four miles more. In the old days going to the village was an event. It meant traveling with horses or on foot, and took so much time that it could not be done frequently. Now, even up in our little valley, many people have automobiles and can run over to one of our three villages in from fifteen to twenty-five minutes. We take thirty going to Cobleskill, and enjoy the country sights and sounds. Sometimes, traveling along at twenty miles an hour on the broad state road, a big red-necked fertilizer agent held up thirty seconds by our passing a road gang gives us a fierce rebuke with his horn and a pitying or contemptuous shake of his head as he goes by. There may be places where "slow-pokes" endanger traffic and where it is one's duty to speed up to help a line that must go single file, but too many motorists act as if driving along leisurely or stopping to look at scenery were allied to the unforgivable sin.

Our village for "trading," for "metropolitan contacts" and for our modest recreation is the old home town, Cobleskill. It has been a center for the people

round about for nearly 170 years. The Dutch and German farmers used to call it affectionately "Stadje," or "Stadtche"—little city—the Dutch spelling it one way and the Germans the other. One of my grandmothers could remember as a child the old folks talking about "going down to Stadje."

Stadje has grown into a village of 2,500 or 3,000 people. It has become also much more prosperous than when I was a child, but conditions of business have changed greatly. The two banks do four or five times as much business in a year, but some of the stores have been affected by the growth of the chain store idea and by the automobile, which brings Albany and Schenectady near by. Passenger train service has not improved. If anything there are fewer trains, but new bus lines run up and down the valley and this summer the "coast to coast" buses pass our door in Cobleskill. The old home stands at a street intersection where traffic now is controlled by green and red lights. Once we could play ball in the road in front of the house, or at any rate on the Elm Street bridge just over the way, but in these days a long line of motor vehicles of every description often blocks the entrance to our driveway or stretches across the bridge. To us the place is worth a thousand or two thousand dollars less for residence purposes because of the automobiles starting and stopping, but in fact values have gone up if they have changed at all. The village is still in the stage when it sends delegations to Albany to protest against rerouting through traffic over the old plank road half a mile south of Main Street. Of course the only solution for the future must be in the way of trunk lines which avoid cities and villages. But few Chambers of Commerce as yet take that view. All will come to it in time.

When we go down to Stadje one of our prob-

lems is to find a place to park on the Main Street. It is the same problem in Cobleskill, N. Y., and Red Bank, N. J., that we have in New York and Boston.

We try to park on Main Street because we have supplies to load up. We make a list day by day and hour by hour at the farm, for one does not go to Stadje every day. One such list will show the wide range of our interests and needs. Nails appear under cheese because the list is made item by item as we think of things: Collars, razor blades, lamb chops, peanuts, oilcloth, *"Leader,"* railroad tickets, putty, ice, coffee, bread, matches, window pane, 5 lbs. ten-penny nails, cheese, knife sharpener, mouse trap, tomatoes, milk, check book, two twelve-inch facing boards, twelve feet each, thimble, two five-inch facing boards, twelve feet each, 52 feet ridge roll, green paint for blinds. What with a hundred pounds of ice and boards or roofing fastened to the side of the car, we usually come back well loaded. Never yet have we come back without discovering something we ought to have put down on our list. Once I found to my dismay that I had left the paint on the counter in the store where I had bought it.

"Solitude is sweet, but give me one friend in my retreat to whom to whisper, solitude is sweet." We amplify that idea a little and say, "Give us all our friends and relatives to see when we are in the mood." That is the great charm of Stadje. There are the two family homes, with the children and young folks. There are the neighbors we have known for years. There are some of the boys and girls who went to school with us and who are housekeepers or cashiers or lawyers or doctors or storekeepers now. There are the people who early went away and who come back from all parts of the country for the summer. And there is the older generation to which father and mother belonged—their friends or clients or acquain-

tances, the mere sight of whom brings back the tenderest memories. To stay in Stadje all of our vacation means being guests—guests accorded every conceivable privilege but nevertheless guests. For a real vacation we want our own establishment, whether it is a hotel room or an isolated farmhouse. So we stay up in the hollow and go down to Stadje.

One of the boys who used to be in school with me is going to run for County Judge this fall. He is a Democrat. The good old days have passed when Democratic victory in Schoharie County was a foregone conclusion, but there is little question about his election. From the time he was twelve or fourteen until he was admitted to the bar, he worked in the cemetery summers, digging, grading, turfing, helping in every way to earn money for his education. He stuck to the home school and studied law in an office in the old-fashioned way, but he dug and toiled. When he got a case he worked over it. Instead of all this experience narrowing him as it does so many lawyers, he developed an interest in community matters, park and public library, and civic beautification, and worked hard along these lines too. Success in Cobleskill may be just as fine and noble as success on broader stages. His success pleases all of his old friends. So failure also may rock business locally as much as a black day on Wall Street rocks the country. Two of the largest corporations have gone down in Cobleskill in the past three or four years, with pitiable loss to other people and change in family situations that have been heart-rending. One business always had had to struggle along on inadequate capital. The other had been regarded as solid as the two banks, both of which locally are the last word in solidity. But if it is humiliating in a village like Cobleskill to have everybody know about one's affairs, one's struggles, deprivations, twists, turns, make-

shifts to get along—all the indefinable things which poverty means—it is more than made up by having practically everybody kind, helpful, considering themselves lest they also come into such a state. There are all kinds of mental and physical gifts in this world—in Cobleskill as in London or Hongkong or New York. Only we get a little closer to the human scene in a place like Stadje, and perhaps come to realize better both the ponderable and imponderable factors that make for success and failure. And we see that however hard failure, even if temporary, may be on the older generation, the hardship involved may be the making of the younger.

One of the great changes which have come over the face of things in Cobleskill is the organization of a golf and country club. One of our trips down to the village was to visit this club. A farm of one hundred acres lying a mile east of the village on the Albany road has been purchased by the club. An expert has laid out a golf course. Plumbers, carpenters, bricklayers, are at work on the old farmhouse, turning it into a club house. Part of the big barn will be used for showers, part for a store of golf supplies, and still there will be room to spare. We went to see the grounds on a beautiful afternoon just after the hot, muggy weather of the first part of September had been ended by a rain. Twenty or more people were out on the nine-hole course, going around alone or playing foursomes. The register showed that people had been driving over from villages all around ever since the course had been opened, and one of the officials said that the fees from non-members had taken care of the grounds. Of course the Madame and I are members, in the club from the beginning. Why should one have an old home town which one loves, if one can not share in its rights, privileges, prerogatives, emoluments, assessments, taxes and

dues? The old farmhouse with its new fireplace for the main lobby or lounge will make a cozy place to rest. The porches will be attractive places in the long summer days. The holes seem to have been laid out with skill. But the thing that struck us was the magnificent view from all parts of the grounds. Even to us who know the great variety of scenery possible among the hills of old Schoharie, it was a revelation. Across the beautiful slopes of the green, over the woods which border the course, one looked southward to the Petersburg ridge, only a mile away, cut by a deep wooded gully or glen. Westward lay the village in the valley, a noble spire rising above the trees. Beyond the village run two of the loveliest valleys in all the world, made by the Cobleskill and its tributary the West Branch, extending straight up to the ridge eight miles away that forms the watershed, with Summit Mountain, more to the southwest, dominating the scene. To the north one looked over the pike, the creek, the railroad, to hilly farms in the foreground and to higher points beyond. In the northwest the fine ridge we call by the unlovely word "Shanks" protects the village at its foot from the fiercest winds of winter. And even to the eastward, from which one might naturally expect to be cut off, one could see places far down the valley toward Schenectady and Albany. To get the picture at all clearly, one must imagine this country club situated on one of the lower hills of the valley, looking to high ridges in three directions, from all of which the lower hills come tumbling into the valley. The higher hills are wooded. The lower hills are farmed. There are no gas tanks, no tall buildings, no unlovely signs near by, at least, and what stacks rise in the village are hidden by the trees. If progressive purveyors of oil or gas or tires or pills put their glaring advertisements in the foreground the club has two remedies: Boycott

the firms, and plant shrubbery on the state road to hide them. States are coming to the latter course very rapidly. The fairest spots in the world, our leaders say, must not be ruined.

There are old folks who shake their heads over the coming of a golf club to Stadje, and perhaps with some reason. Whatever tempts any man or woman to waste his time, to spend money he can ill afford, to neglect his family or business, is wrong. But our strenuous American people have yet to learn that man does not live by bread alone. There ought to be room in this life of ours for rest, recreation and social contacts. The recreations which take us out into the open are the best recreations, and golf does that. We are singularly unimaginative if we think that all there is to do for change is to tear full speed over crowded roads for a hundred miles in a motor car, and tear back again. In places like Cobleskill golf playing is more like golf in Scotland, where it originated, or at least where it came to its finest development. All classes play golf. It is a poor man's game as well as the game of the rich. Nobody is rich in Cobleskill, at least in the modern sense, but many people have a surplus, and part of it may well go to building up an attractive country club. It is either that or having the younger ones tear off to Amsterdam or Stamford to play, for play they will. And why not play at home?

Old "Uncle Jerry" Borst played the snare drum when I was a boy. Aaron Malick beat the bass drum. Gideon Young played the fife or marched at the head of the drum corps with drawn sword, dressed in plug hat, blue frock coat and red sash. Every face in the band radiated cheer. All the bystanders, a good part of the community, enjoyed the fun. The harness business or the garden or the insurance office did not suffer much, and these men gave us boys the thrill of

our lives. Older generations in Cobleskill pitched horseshoes. They supported a ball nine. They played poker. In those happy days of fifty years ago they even had barbecues. Aaron and Gideon and Jerry would have felt foolish, knocking a tiny ball all over the lot. Mrs. Aaron and Mrs. Gideon and Mrs. Jerry would have been "the talk of the town" in the bright jerseys, short skirts and silk stockings of Mrs. Bob or Mrs. Fred on the golf course to-day. "Time makes ancient good uncouth." But our fathers had their play times, different as they were. So let youth be served.

This year we made extra trips to Stadje because of the repairs and improvements, long postponed but finally undertaken.

When the new metal roofs were put on all the farm buildings fourteen years ago, we left the back side of the big barn, because the shingles were in such good condition. This year we have had them ripped off and metal put on. The work has been done by the neighbors. It has been interesting to discover that these shingles were all "hand shaved." That is, they were made two or more generations ago by some workman who "rived" them out, using a frow, or cleaving knife, and a draw shave. In frow we have a word which is bound to pass out of the language because the thing it describes no longer exists. It staggered us to think of the labor involved in making shingles for one-half of the roof of one of our four barn buildings. George figured that there were 24,000 shingles on an area 52 by 45—"a winter's work for a man." The cost of building would have been prohibitive if men had not worked in those times for a dollar a day. Gathering up the old shingles in baskets and putting them away for kindling was light and easy work. One felt like taking off his hat to every shingle for the service rendered. And they went out

in a blaze of glory hurrying the bacon and coffee to a climax.

For fourteen years the buildings have gone without painting, and now show the need of it. Three years in succession I have given orders to have it done, but nobody got at it. Now into the Hollow there has come an old bachelor painter from Richmondville, fleeing from the high cost of living to the simpler ways of our valley. He has his own house and grounds for less than a room in the village. He does not have to work, but prefers to work some of the time. The other man is our trusted caretaker, who lives on a hill overlooking us. These men fix the siding as they go along. By turns they are roofers, painters, carpenters. They lacked a pole for a scaffolding, and got my consent to fell a young poplar down by the creek. The resourcefulness of men living in a valley like ours, the number of jobs which they can do well, the expedients they devise to surmount difficulties, their kindness to one another in "trading work," are refreshing in this age of specialization. Some of our best thinkers tell us that in professions like medicine we must make a sharp swing back to the all around development which these men represent if we are to progress. In the specialization responsible for such wonderful progress there are abuses society must correct.

September 25, 1929.

CHAPTER IV

KNEE DEEP IN JUNE

WE made two jumps of it in getting to the farm. First Boston to Cobleskill, and second Cobleskill to the farm. It would hardly have done to come upon it too suddenly.

Saturday night found us on the roof garden of a popular Copley Square hotel with two friends, eating their food, hearing of their full busy lives, looking over at the towers of Trinity and the campanile of the Old South, watching the sun go down on another day of our Boston life—on another period of our toil.

That night we took the sleeper for Albany, where we connect with the train for home.

It might seem as if there were nothing new to be said of sleeping cars, but our gentle readers do not know us. Every trip is different. This was not one of our best trips. We were not exuberant or even reasonably optimistic when we turned in, but plain tired. We were not very amiable when we turned out. I had three arguments before 6.30 a. m.—with the new green porter as to the propriety of making people leave the car at 6 a. m. standard time, with a red-cap about the propriety of my carrying bags and bundles a quarter of a mile and letting him carry them fifty yards, with the Madame as to why I had come off without a single clean collar. But a holy Sabbath calm settled over us when we reached the station restaurant and smelled the famous coffee and received the same old cordial welcome.

Here our traveling was over. We did not have to wait for the morning train. A younger brother, who had been in Kingston the night before, drew

up in front of the station with his car. A promising young nephew who had been in South America for three years suddenly appeared to help us out with our bags. Soon we were on the Great Western turnpike following the route of the stagecoaches between Albany and Buffalo. It is a wonderfully beautiful drive out the Great Western turnpike, forty-five miles to Cobleskill. The Helderbergs show up on the left and the foot-hills of the Adirondacks on the right. Twenty-five miles west of Albany we begin to see the familiar peaks of Schoharie County, Bark Zaury showing up first.

From Boston to Cobleskill was a jump from sea level to an elevation of a thousand feet, from a fourth floor super-heated apartment to a large square village home with all the memories of childhood, from the office with its baskets of correspondence, its telephone, and its innumerable decisions, to the garden and to the shady back-yard.

But Cobleskill now is more or less metropolitan. At least it is the metropolis of the county. The through trains, the coast to coast buses, the long lines of tourists headed east and west, go through the village. It is a delightful place to rest in, but not the real country.

From Cobleskill to the little hill farm was a jump from 1,000 feet to 1,500 feet in elevation, from "state roads" to a back country road, from gardens to wild woods and meadows, from the noise of motors and the sound of telephone and people coming and going to where few ever pass and no one is apt to come —and where the great silence is broken only by wind or the buzz of bees or the splashing of water or mooing of cows or the song of birds.

We reached the little hill farm about the middle of the month, on a broiling hot day. We departed from Cobleskill early in the morning with ice and

groceries, and long before noon we were out in the fields, knee deep in June.

The Madame had missed the bobolinks in Washington, but as soon as we turned off the state road we heard their tinkling song, and soon there were bobolinks on both sides of us, swaying on slender bushes, rising in tuneful ecstasy and dropping suddenly into the grass. In the same old place the vesper sparrows rose and flew on ahead of the slow moving car. When we drove into the yard at the farm a bobolink flew overhead singing madly, and dropped down into our own meadow.

Knee deep in June? Why, we were waist deep in June! There were millions of buttercups, buttons of gold as the French call them, and quantities of wild geranium. Stony Creek was not roaring over its rocky bed, but there was plenty of water to make music. An indigo bunting came and perched on the tip top of one of our apple trees and sang for us in all the heat of the noonday, and the catbirds were in great form.

The Madame said: "This year I should like to see a bird we never have discovered at the farm," and the words were hardly out of her mouth when a chestnut-sided warbler poised on a branch near us with food in its little bill for its young, and then dropped down to its nest.

Other old bird friends saluted us. The first were the great crested flycatcher, the phoebe, the song sparrow, the Maryland yellow-throat, the summer warbler, the chippie, the field sparrow, the red-wing, the meadow lark, the downy woodpecker.

There were other interesting things. The long blackberries were in blossom, the strawberries were ripe, and we saw women in sunbonnets picking in a neighbor's field. The little schoolhouse on a corner of our farm was almost hidden by honey locusts in blos-

som and tangles of wild roses in full bloom. The little schoolhouse is no longer used (the children are "carried to the lower district"), and in another year or so men will have to cut a path if for any reason they want to reach the front door.

Two diametrically opposite movements are taking place at the same moment in this section. One is the movement away from the farms, which revert to forests, sometimes by planting trees, at other times by the resourcefulness of nature unaided. This movement is making the region more wild and lonely. The other is the building of motor roads, the extension of mail routes, and the erection of telephone and electric power lines. This brings the city and city comforts into the remote country districts.

All the spring the farmers in our Hollow and all the way up from the state road have been keenly interested in having an electric power line reach the "Summit" by our valley rather than by a rival valley. They gladly gave rights of way. We were slow about it, not because we wanted to block it, but because we have a lawyer brother. The power people wanted to put holes in our back-yard and straight across our big meadow, but this brother gave the matter personal attention and induced them to take a route much better for us without abandoning the project. So as we drove up the Hollow we found new poles and shiny new wires. We found also an estimate for wiring the farmhouse, and, hard as it was to consent to any change, we decided that the old oil lamps were too hazardous and that the electricity must come in. Other improvements had been made in our absence, but of those we will speak the next time.

As I left the office that Saturday night I picked up the *Christian Science Monitor* and on the front page saw a three-column cut of a Lincoln statue unveiled on Flag Day in Jersey City near the eastern end of the

Lincoln Highway. "John Hay told the sculptor, James Earl Fraser," said the *Monitor*, "that the Emancipator after long cabinet meetings would slip out of the White House at dusk through a back door and walk away up into the hills. There he would sit by the roadside and try to straighten out his ideas under the stars."

"There are many presidential Lincolns," Mr. Fraser continued. "I have gained the idea that Lincoln did much of his thinking out of doors. He was brought up in the open and I believe he thought better out of doors. That is what I have tried to portray. "

So to the many pictures on the walls of the old farmhouse, copies of old masters, prints picked up here and there, bits of artistic color from the Sunday supplements, we have added "Lincoln Thinking Things Through in the Outdoors."

Generations of lesser men, sitting on stone walls or lying under apple trees, climbing the hills or watching the vast expanse of old ocean, have had their vision clarified and their hearts made strong in the same way.

June 16, 1930.

THE NEW TERRACE

CHAPTER V

MAKING IMPROVEMENTS

SOME forward steps are like those taken by little Belgian boys during the German occupation. They played soldier and formed their line. Then the leader gave the command, *"Vorwaerts nach Berlin,"* and the whole line moved backward, right, left, right, left, as far as they could. They "made progress backward."

So with a man who takes an old Colonial house with noble lines and many memories and cuts down, runs out a wing, plasters gingerbread over it, and achieves an effect of vulgar newness.

So with politics. So with churches. So with schools. Not all alleged forward steps are forward steps.

We believe that we have escaped the danger of changing the character of the little hill farm in the improvements made this year.

To begin with there are the chimneys. Two of them did not come down into the living rooms, but only into dry, dark spaces above the rooms hardly big enough to be called attics, and the stovepipes, which sometimes got very hot, had to run into these places to reach the chimneys. To be sure we wrapped the pipes with asbestos, but the fire insurance man always raised the rate on account of them. Now one such chimney has gone altogether and the other has been relaid, starting from the kitchen.

An improvement of this kind need not destroy any element of quaintness. With us we have added quaintness, for the new wooden cupboard under the kitchen chimney looks as if it had come down from the days of our great grandfathers.

Then there are the cellar walls. They kept bulging here and there and now and then tumbled in. They have been relaid, and on the uphill side of the house, where the water comes rushing down from the high fields every spring, there is a deep ditch to catch it and lead it off. Also we have new gutters. We have learned that if water from anywhere, roof or mountain, soaks in back of foundations just before a heavy freeze, it is the end of the foundations.

Things full of blessing, out of place are full of cursing, whether convention speeches or rain water. Nobody with a flair for the antique could possibly fight us on new foundations and gutters. As for paint, it is an ancient and honorable ally. In an old-fashioned place like ours, we stick to white with green blinds for the house, and red with a white stripe for the barns.

Green for the barns might look better for the summer time. Red is ideal when there is snow on the ground. The barns, however, always have been red, and red they always must be. "What was good enough for generations past is good enough for me." Some concession must be made to the conservatives for whom I edit a paper, and I had rather yield on the color of our barns than on anything else.

For years we have faced the problem of rotting porch and steps. What used to be the parlor is now our bed-room. It was reached from the outside by steps so rotten that we would have been ashamed of them if anybody had seen them, but the syringa bushes, the copper beech, the Norway maple, rose-bushes and the spirea have grown up so tall and thick that one can see only bits of the house from the road. Then the porch in front of the one-story part of the house where we used to sit had given way in places, and on it we had to rock gently. The high steps to the side kitchen door had fallen down entirely.

Nor were there any steps to the library, and so we never used that door. We have dealt vigorously with all five entrances to the house. In front the porch and parlor steps have been rebuilt of stone and concrete. Along the back and side entrances there now runs a new stone terrace. It does away with the need of steps. It takes the place of a side porch we have always wanted. In all it is fifty-one feet long, a little over eight feet wide on the side and four feet wide on the back. It has no columns and no top to obstruct the view. It fills the corner made by the main part of the house and the ell. It looks out to the southeast and north, and on the back to the west also. Built on the side hill, it is too high in most places to step off, but the concrete leads down to the artesian well, and on the back the step is easy. We can not say that this improvement looks "old," but it does not look out of character with the rest of the place.

On it always there is a shady spot if one wants the shade, but we are sun worshipers. On it always is a breezy spot also, but the Madame especially loves the protected nooks. No one passing can see us as we sit there, and we look down the valley and off at the hills for miles. It has created for us an out-of-doors room, the only disadvantage being that the couch, table and chairs have to be pushed hastily through the library and kitchen doors when it rains. It is a dining-room and sitting-room and observation tower combined.

The deep grass comes up to the very edge of the terrace and rabbits dodge in and out. The haymakers leave this grass to the very end of haying. The garden, overgrown now with berry bushes, and the mulberry and peach trees, are just a little way down the slope, and beyond the berry bushes there is an old orchard. There are wild flowers and birds always at

hand. Our flowers are mainly roses and buttercups, daisies and pink mallow in the tall grass, and jill-over-the-ground around the artesian well. A tall weed with seeds like those of a dandelion, salsify or vegetable oyster, an escape from the garden, grows in abundance, and nearly always goldfinches are swaying up and down on the stems, pulling out silky fibers and eating the seeds. The catbirds and robins are much in the mulberry tree, the Maryland yellow-throat is always among the berry bushes, the bobolinks sing in the upper orchard, and in the thickets along the creek we have common birds like redstarts, flickers and woodpeckers, and less common birds like the veery and tanager. The wood thrush, that in Washington sings under our windows, here sings far off in the deep woods. We hear it as we sit on our terrace at dinner. But the veery is close by, singing morning, noon and night. We can not agree with some of the writers who regard the veery's song as "superior in some respects to all others of its genus." There are the wood thrush and hermit thrush to be considered. But the presence of the veery so near us, its wild, pathetic music and its swift, infrequent visits to our mulberry, have greatly enriched life at the farm.

We will not try to list all the birds seen from the new porch, but of the seventy-six species which we have identified here, the great majority come around these buildings because they stand alone so much of the year. A catbird was still feeding her four little ones in the syringa bush when we came, and a nestful of yellow warblers was swaying up and down in the rosebush by the front door.

Looking off from the porch we get the ridge which carries the old abandoned Charlotteville pike or plank road to Albany, our own wooded hill and part of Pine Mountain around to the southeast. For our beloved Cobble Mountain we go to the front. When

WHERE THE VEERIES SING

attention to individual trees has made us forget the forest, and study of an individual bird has made us forget how much more there is to nature than any one little part of it, we look off at the hills and regain our perspective.

While we go on trying to learn trees, ferns, wild flowers, birds, insects and the other parts of the teeming life about us, it seems as if the verse of a British poet, Richard Realf, which we read early in our visit, were directing our thought this year:

> O earth! thou hast not any wind that blows
> Which is not music; every weed of thine
> Pressed rightly flows in aromatic wine;
> And every humble hedgerow flower that grows,
> And every little brown bird that doth sing,
> Hath something greater than itself, and bears
> A living word to every living thing,
> Albeit it holds the message unawares,
> All shapes and sounds have something which is not
> Of them: a Spirit broods amid the grass;
> Vague outlines of the Everlasting Thought
> Lie in the melting shadows as they pass;
> The touch of an Eternal Presence thrills
> The fringes of the sunsets and the hills.

Inside the house we have the wires and fixtures for electric lights, the plugs for an electric refrigerator, or ironing board, or patent washing machine, or what not. The electricians have been crawling around the attics, tearing out old squirrel nests, discovering occasionally solid plank partitions we did not know we had, and getting us ready for the new era.

Occasionally a farmer has driven in to discuss the power line and the contracts which the company is offering. With many of these hard-working men, it is the electricity for the barn with which they are concerned, the electric milkers, the electric refrigeration, the lights for the times when they have to do

chores long before daylight. In a dairy country electric power can be set to work in many ways.

On July 2 we got the lights. There were great doings at Charlotteville, to celebrate the coming of the line. We have much better light now all over the house, but we can not say good-by to the oil lamps without regret. They link us to a time that has gone. They are one way of hanging on to people and scenes we loved dearly. But progress must be served. The electricity is cleaner, safer, and much more efficient. With people who have to consider their eyes this is important. And we are consoled by the fact that we are hanging on to the candles. They adorn our mantels. And if this electric line is not different from all others that we have known, there will come the time when I shall call hastily to the Madame: "Get me a match and bring a candle. The electricity is off."

Our fireplace is the *piece de resistance* of our feast of improvements. Always a new fireplace is a lottery. So many times it smokes after it is built. So we were nervous about ours. We sent the bulletin of the U. S. Government on the subject to our builder, we measured the fireplaces in our Boston apartment, in the old home at Cobleskill, and in the houses of friends, we consulted all available experts, we figured it out by trigonometry, algebra and physics, and then we found ourselves too busy to go up to superintend it and had to leave it largely to our builder. He was, however, the real sort—a country-bred man, a natural mechanic, used to turning his hand to a dozen trades, amenable to suggestions, and honest. He did a beautiful job for us. The fireplace is of brick, unpainted, the chimney is on the outside of the house, an ash place is in the cellar and an extra flue has been built in case any one ever has need of a furnace. In the living-room, the fireplace is finished with a mantel six and one-half feet long and four and two-thirds

feet high. The fireplace itself is three and one-half feet wide and almost two feet deep. And up to date it has not smoked. There never was stove or fireplace yet which would not smoke with just the right combination of wind and draft, but we have tried ours in all kinds of weather and it has a hundred per cent score.

The fireplace completely makes over the living-room. Nights we go there instinctively. So deep is love of fire in the blood, that often in the past we would sit in the kitchen even if we did not need the fire that was smouldering in the range. Now the living-room is a true living-room. In the wake of the fireplace there had to be papering, happily just over, "*Dieu merci.*"

When the paper-hangers folded up their boards and their ladders and went off, we said simultaneously, "We will wait until to-morrow to clean up." Then one began picking up debris and feeding the fire, and the other began to sweep. Soon we were at it, full tilt. The Madame said, "You mop as if you thought you had to go through the floor," but when it dried there were no white streaks. I was very proud and I fear I did some boasting. But it was harmless boasting, for few there are to be made envious by skill in mopping. Before dark we had the room in livable condition. The flickering firelight threw shadows on our new paper, which we could not admire enough. Soft grays predominated and there was foliage and water. The dome of the Capitol at Washington was barely suggested in the pattern. Our theory is that pictures and wall paper at the farm should remind us of Venice or Boston or Washington or Hong Kong, and pictures and wall paper in Boston should suggest the farm. We don't want pale imitations of reality in the presence of the reality.

Coming back to the fireplace it ought to be

added, for those who pay city prices for wood, that we are not reckless in building a fireplace at the farm, for there is enough waste wood lying around here and there to run us for a long time. An old farm is much like the sea shore in this respect. One can pick up the wood needed. We burn the farm driftwood. And if the farm driftwood is the limbs of old apple trees it makes for us a fire superior to the best oak that can be bought.

To be sure there are melancholy thoughts that come with repairs. "Why could not so and so have lived to see it?" "How much X or Y or Z would have enjoyed it!" "Will we get use enough out of it to pay for doing it?" "Who will take it when we are gone?" But the improvements which cause the thoughts cure them. Melancholy can not hold the fort long either in the sunlight or the firelight. Somebody will enjoy these things, if we are wise about them, long after we are gone. And plenty of people will enjoy them with us while we live.

We have especially enjoyed the workmen who have been with us, coming and going with their trucks and pleasure cars. They were born in the country, most of them. They live in Richmondville or Cobleskill, only a few miles distant. They know something beside their specialty. One is in politics, another plays in the band, a third sings in a choir and is devoted to music, and one served in France during the war. They are rounded citizens as well as members of their craft. Narrowing as the country may be in some says, it is broadening in other ways. It gives us contacts with our fellows which keep us human. It makes us know more about how the other fellow lives and does his work. That, I was going to say, is why I like the country. I had better say that is one of ten thousand reasons why I love it.

July 7, 1930.

THE MADAME AT THE WELL

CHAPTER VI

FURTHER IMPROVEMENTS

IN September, 1914, we had men come and drill a well at the farm The machinery arrived on the third, they began drilling on the sixth, and struck water on the eleventh, at a depth of sixty-seven feet. To reach the water the men dug through five feet of surface soil and drilled through fifty feet of hard-pan clay and twelve feet of rock. The water came up clear, cold, sparkling, and during the sixteen years since has never stopped running. In the winter it builds up a stalagmite of solid ice, but the flow goes on. It is not a great flow—240 gallons a day—but it has always been more than we needed. The reputation of the flowing well has spread far and wide, and even in this well-watered land people often drive in for a drink. The past summer one farmer has come with milk cans and filled them at our concrete trough.

In the years that we have had this well, we have often talked of piping the water into the house. We were discouraged by the fact that the well did not have head enough back of it to force it into a tank in our attic from which it could be sent where needed. We have at least five springs on the hillside, where there is head enough, but we have been dissuaded from using them by the blasting and digging necessary to run a ditch.

The last thing we expected to do this summer was to put running water into the house, for bathroom, toilets, and kitchen purposes. We felt that we had accomplished enough. Fireplace, porches, gutters and foundations, painting and ditching, had done

quite enough to our bank account. Besides, we were getting along comfortably with things as they were. Inside plumbing could wait. Then all at once came the precipitate to our solution of future improvements. We got the idea that the M's were coming to see us. Now the M's are among our choicest friends, nature lovers, unselfish, cultured, traveled people. They never said they were coming, but when we heard that they were leaving Washington we inferred it. We had talked it over so often. So we sent a note to the Richmondville contractor. We told him the emergency. It would never do to have the M's at the farm without a bath-room. True, they have no bath-room at their island in the Potomac and no kitchen sink, but Beards Hollow was a different proposition. The contractor promised to come in a week to see us. Then we explored the hill pastures for just the right spring. We sent for a veteran farmer to find the place that he had dug out for the cattle when he had hired the pasturage years ago—"a place that never dried up." We planned to dig it out and see what kind of flow there was. One morning a stalwart young farmer, busy in the hay, pulled up by the side of our pasture and asked what we were up to. We told him. Said he: "You have water, haven't you? Best water in the country right by your back door? What do you want more water for?" We told him we didn't want to interfere with the flow of the artesian well, that our lawyer brother never would forgive us if we did, that the chief joy of a vacation to him at the farm was catching a glass full of this cold, pure, sparkling water. "Well," said the farmer, "you are letting yourself in for a big expense for pipe and ditch if you bring it from up on the hill. It's a thousand feet and some of the way it's rocky. Now you have electricity, haven't you? You are allowed forty kilowatts a month and you probably use about

three. (The fact is that in July we did use just three.) Pipe your water from your well to a tank in your cellar. Get a little electric pump and you can send it anywhere in your house. Turn it into your cellar tank at night and let it run outside as it does now in the daytime. You can't use up half the water you've got."

This all sounded like hard common sense. We checked up with our contractor and he said it was common sense. So we decided to use what the gods had already given us. So came action. Haying ended on a Tuesday, and on a Thursday our men started digging for our septic tank. There were little incidents like yellow-jackets in the grape arbor that had fallen down, one or two harmless snakes sent down from the hills by the dry weather, the necessity of hoisting a large grape vine up into a tree so that the men could dig under it, but the work went fast. We discovered that our sloping side yard was an ancient fill, done seventy odd years ago when the house was built. Bits of crockery, an old fork, and parts of unknown tools came to light—mute reminders of a generation gone.

Then there was all the excitement of the dynamite. In one place thirty feet from the house, where a tank was to go down, we struck clay hard-pan. The men said it would take one man all day to go through it. Couldn't my brother come up and loosen it with dynamite? The Madame looked rather askance at the idea of letting off dynamite so close to our windows, and more askance at the idea of any of us handling it. But she gave in. I went for the dynamite, the fuse and the caps. I never had hauled dynamite, and I can't say that I liked it. I had only a few sticks, but the quarry man said they should ride in one place and the caps that explode it in another place. He said the caps might go off with a jar, or the hot

sun, or a spark from a pipe. So I gave the caps a soft seat. Though I knew my relatives handled quantities of the explosive in their quarry, and that dynamite was entirely safe to carry in a car, I found myself giving other cars a wide berth, when I brought it up, and going softly over bumps. I was relieved to place the stuff in our wagon-house.

The use of the dynamite, half a stick at a time, in the hard clay was most illuminating to me. It did the business. One of our diggers, accustomed to use it on his farm, said that it was by far the best thing to use for digging holes in which to set trees, or getting rid of big stones, or blasting out old stumps.

My brother had quite an audience. When he lighted the fuse, half of us retreated up the road and the other half down the road to flag vehicles and to keep the dog employed. A shower of stones and flying chunks of clay hit our metal roofs. One chunk went past my brother's head like a projectile, but there were no casualties.

All this haste and digging, all this hauling of dynamite and blasting, was to get ready for the M's by the middle of August. For such special folks we had to have things in apple-pie order.

It was driving home from Utica about the middle of July that we first seriously talked over bringing the water into the house at once. It was the last day of the month that the ditching started. Then there was a delay of two weeks for supplies. Our contractor with our approval had ordered several things sent by freight. When they came only part were there. It would have been far simpler to take a truck and go to the nearest city or town where such things are kept in stock. Combined freight bills would have paid for the truck, and we could have come home at night riding in our own bath-tub or on top of our own tank.

One thing that we did not have to wait for was our wooden storage tank for the cellar. There is a silo plant at Cobleskill where they make durable things and do them over night. They could do a thriving business in tanks or tubs if they did not scrutinize the object for which tubs are to be used. The man who says "None of your business" when asked what they are to be used for does not get his tanks. Our friend who runs the place will not help men illegally to make booze. But we passed the examination. In fact the proprietor is a pillar in a church where I often preach. So rushed did we feel about the M's that I took the risk myself of making the measurements for this tank. There was more to it than the height and width of the cellar door. There were the cellar steps. What must we allow for the slant? I nailed five-foot boards together to make a rough wheel without a tire and rolled it down the steps. It went through. Then I took the width and figured close. But how enormous the thing looked when it arrived. And all three of the men handling it shook their heads and said, "It won't go through." I couldn't wait. We put planks down instantly and turned the tub on its side. Down the planks it came, nearer and nearer, just missing the top sill, just scraping by the frame on the sides, but into the cellar it rolled. I was prouder of my engineering than of my sermonizing or my writing, or even of my cooking, and that is pride of high degree.

The middle of August, when we expected the M's, we were all torn up. One ditch had been covered but the long ditch was open. Part of my daily duty was to go into the ditch and lift out "Mr. Toad of Toad Hall" and a large circle of relatives. Mr. Star Mole also got into trouble with the cistern-like hole for the septic tank. Poor fellow, how he ran around when I went down to rescue him! How desperately he tried

to dig into the hard-pan! No go. It was like solid rock to him. Lifting him by the tail, I tossed him gently out, but he made a dash for the hole and came tumbling down. Once more, "blind as a mole," he came rushing down again. Then I carried him out and away ten feet and put him near soft earth. It was all in vain, for the next day he lay on his back in the hole, dead. I put him carefully on a board back of the big barn to show him to a nephew—his wonderful little digging feet, his interesting nose, his soft body —but some of our wild creatures which act as scavengers took him away in the night.

If I were Safed the Sage I should try my hand at "A Parable of the Mole." We all know the people who keep tumbling down into the holes from which they have been rescued. Sometimes we have done it ourselves.

We were glad that the M's were delayed. Our door-yard looked like a construction camp. The room for the M's was torn up. Water pipes were appearing in unexpected places. There were holes in ceilings and floors. Our contractor worked very fast and made comparatively little dirt, but things were far from normal. At last water ran in the cellar. To our surprise it ran a third faster than outside, furnishing 360 gallons a day of clear cold water fresh from the heart of the earth. And what pleased us most was that a simple turn of the faucet in the cellar sent it trickling and rippling again by the back door.

While we were held up by the missing bath-tub, sink, and tank, our attention was attracted another way.

Some improvements which one makes on an old place like ours are the result of deliberate plan, some of hasty plan, and some of no plan whatever, but are thrust upon one. In the last category belongs the work we now began on the wagon-house. This is the

barn building nearest the house, only eighty feet away, and, like all the other buildings, it stands on a hillside. The farmers call it a half-basement building. On the lower side there were places for hogs and chickens. Above were two other floors.

George suggested that we get Tiny and Alva, jack the building up and put in a new sill. It was a little out of line. I assented immediately, for the job appeared to me something like jacking up a car and putting on a tire. However, when these men got to work they speedily discovered that we were lucky not to have had the building tumbling down on us. The sills had rotted and the entire structure had slid down hill. Several main sleepers were pulled out. The founding fathers of this valley were great builders. They used heavy timbers. They made wonderful mortise joints. They pinned things with strong wooden pins, but they depended on people keeping up their foundations. We had neglected ours. If at any time in the last five years we had driven a car in on the wagon-house floor we would have gone through to the basement.

Fortunately we did not drive a car in, for the simple reason that we could not have got in if we had tried. The place for years had been a catch-all for paint, tools, broken furniture and firewood. Always we had been going to clean it up. Always the summer had gone by without our doing it. Fate sometimes favors the indolent. In the past I have preached "Go to the ant, thou sluggard." Now I may preach a second sermon in the sluggard series on "Consider the wagon-house, thou over zealous one." There are advantages in not cleaning out. For the building stayed up until George and Tiny and Alvah crawled under and began to poke around. They speedily crawled out and hustled away for blocks and supports. They rushed to the nearest town for strong wire

cables. Soon three powerful cables were in place, running from side to side and not only stopping the spread of the building but pulling the timbers back into place. A jack working in a hole, braced against a rock and pushing against a timber against the side of the building, rendered powerful help. Old-fashioned methods plus new-fashioned methods made our building solid again. New hemlock posts and planks and new concrete sills all along the lower side we believe will keep it solid.

An interesting part of the work was the pulling down of the wall of the bridge and relaying it with mortar. The bridge of the barn is the structure by which one is enabled to drive in on the high main floor of a basement building. Often it is of timber. To reach the floor of our wagon-house, however, one drives up a slope held by a wall, so that the beam which is the bottom of the main floor is the top of the basement entrance. The men hauled out stones which weighed one or two tons, and hauled them back into place, using horses and rollers and handling them with care and speed. The expense involved in all this work preached a sermon to us on "Watch your foundations." But I learned much beside. I was struck with the resourcefulness of the average hill farmer. Perhaps the men who worked for us are above the average as mechanics, but it is true of most farmers that the training which they receive in tilling their fields, in caring for stock, and in keeping their own buildings in order without hiring experts or buying new things, puts something into them that our public schools and colleges so far have gone after in vain. They have the ability to get along without, to make things do, to adapt means to ends, to face the unexpected, and to win out against odds. Six men and a truck often are needed in the city to fix a spigot. Three men and a truck in the country can move a mountain.

Also I am amazed at my stupidity in allowing a building to get into the shape it did before my eyes. I had eyes and I saw not. It seems as if in the future I never could walk around a building without glancing at the foundations, or live in a building without occasionally poking into the sills. So does life teach us.

And now having gone to the trouble and expense of saving the building, it is incumbent upon us to find use for it. Already the paint has been moved to the second story. The first of the wood has gone down where the hog pen and chicken house once were. Every last vestige of the rotten hog doors and troughs has disappeared. Soon with the front approach rebuilt and the rear doors open, we can drive a car in and straight ahead out again, and there will be room for several cars if visitors come to stay overnight.

The last days of August now are upon us. Things are almost ready. The house is swept and garnished. The yard is picked up. The "dozy" wood is burned. The water is on tap, hot and cold. For our last week here with the M's we shall have the use of the improvements. It has been a great fight but we have won. Our distinguished guests will see what we can do when we set out. As they help wash dishes, they will sing the praises of our beautiful white sink. We have piped the water into the house expressly for the M's, but we have had great fun doing it. So endeth the tale of improvements for 1930.

P. S. The M's were detained on Cape Cod and never came.

August 20, 1930.

CHAPTER VII

ACTION AND REACTION

IT is getting so now that "reactions" extend to "Cruisings." Here comes one from a soulless individual—a page from an August magazine containing an illustrated article: "We Rejuvenate an Old House," by Orson Lowell.

"While we are under contract," says Lowell, "not to write a book about it, surely there can be no harm in jotting down a few chapter headings." A few of the things that he would write about if he brought out a book on "Further Improvements at the Hill Farm," are as follows:

"The babbling brook in the upper pasture and the bubbling spring in the lower cellar."

"The screen which on being raised falls into the view."

"The demurely obstinate back door which one opens by taking off the hinges."

"The quaint many-paneled doors, some of which won't open and others won't shut; some on opening scrape on the ceiling, others drag on the billowing floor."

"The rodents called field mice because they prefer houses."

"The old bed-room window sash which won't go up when it's too hot and won't come down when it rains."

So the list runs. It deals with fallen bricks, keys broken off in locks, gutters which lead water the wrong way, skunks under the tool-house floor, a fireplace which settles down to a quiet smoke every evening, and other appurtenances of an old place.

"But," says Mr. Lowell, "if you think all this annoys us, you are wrong; we adore it. We'll probably start in on another old house as soon as we finish this one. If it doesn't finish us first. For life is short and house is long."

There is enough truth back of these ironic comments to bring reminiscent smiles to many a face. We all have had similar experiences. The truth that Mr. Lowell slyly points out is that houses and lands are a responsibility, that buildings run down, that "moth and rust corrupt and thieves break through and steal," that knowledge is not only power but comfort, and that "care" must be the watchword.

If we were to attempt a list of things that we have done wrong or failed to do at the little hill farm, a single chapter or a series itself could hardly contain them all.

Wholesale we set out a hundred or more apple trees the first year that we arrived. We might have addressed these trees in the language of John Quincy Adams, slightly altered for the occasion: "Sink or swim, live or die, survive or perish. I now wash my hands of you." All died but one. Some were set in water and some on hard pan. Why wouldn't they die?

Some of our pine trees were set under almost as bad conditions, and the fact that we have a considerable number lifting their heads above weeds and bushes is more an evidence of their hardiness than of our knowledge.

Of our neglect of foundations, our letting water run in behind them and freeze, of consequent heaving and rotting, I have written enough. Suffice it to say here that moralists can secure innumerable choice illustrations for Sunday school talks by going with me on a personally conducted tour of our place. It can not be planted in the budding mind too early:

H2O, or *aqua pura,* or water, whether well, spring, artesian or snow water, subjected to a temperature of thirty-two degrees or thereabouts will freeze, congeal, solidify, and in freezing will expand and everlastingly hoist everything out of its path. Freezing water calls for room, and there is no instance on record where it fails to get what it calls for. When it freezes under a foundation that foundation moves out. Character crashes come the same way. First something goes wrong with the foundations. In spite of current comment, this wrong thing may be cold as well as hot. That which is cold and calculating can make as great shipwreck as that which is passionate and unrestrained.

As to our improvements about the place the past summer, for two months we have been in the full glow of action. Now we are experiencing reaction. Have we been violating our fundamental principle of simplicity? we say to ourselves. Have we been ignoring the fact, patent to us these many years, that the more things one gets, the more he must look after? Have we electric lights? Where are the spare fuses? Have we new spigots? Where are the washers and the wrench? Have we a bath-tub? Who will sponge out the trap before winter? Have we a dear little electric pump down cellar that can hoist automatically 5,760 gallons of water per day? Who will speak soothing words to it when it ceases to hoist? Have we the cunningest little pea-coal burner on its own slab of concrete in another dark corner of the cellar to heat our 5,760 gallons of water per day? Who will kindle its energy, feed its little throat, brood lovingly over its dampers? Who will kindly say it nay when it makes the water in our new 30-gallon tank go thump, thump, thump? And who, we ask, can or will bathe often enough to get the full use of our 170 barrels of hot water per day?

One might write thus pessimistically even of the fireplace. Who will carry the shingles and the logs to keep it going? Who will rise in the gray dawn to poke the embers and push the unburned ends together? Who will watch the fire when it gets too exuberant? These are pertinent questions. One might expect appropriately discouraged and disheartened answers. We confess that we have had our misgivings now and then about this feature or that of our "improvements," but our pessimism is hollow and unreal when it comes to the fireplace. "I will rise to poke the embers," I reply to my blue devil. "I will thank God for any glowing unburned ends. I will start the blaze going. There is nothing under heaven I'd rather do than lay an open fire. I'll carry in the wood, my nose close to fragrant bark, and rejoice every step of the way."

Pessimism as to other improvements weakens also when the fire gets really under way. After all, is not the happy life a continual taking pains about something? Reduce living to its simplest status. Consider life in the deep woods or on inland waters. Have you ever noticed what work the good guide does just for one night? He drives the supports for the lean-to down where they will stay. He makes the shelter strong and tight. He lays a bed of fir boughs so deep and fragrant that one thinks it might do for all winter. But it is just for a night. Yet the memory of that night, when one had a good supper and a refreshing sleep miles from a human habitation, goes with one all his days. The fir bough bed built for a night lasts all the nights of life.

We have no reason to be pessimistic. Nor are we down deep within. Everything has worked so far. In fact, we have every reason to be thankful. The very day after the little electric engine was installed and we had all the conveniences of inside

plumbing, the first fierce rain of the season came down upon us, and we were cosy within doors. The tiny pump does its work so valiantly that water just gushes from the spigots. There is nothing hesitating about the flow. The noise that we thought would bother us we scarcely notice. When the pressure in the pipes gets down to twenty pounds a square inch, the engine starts. When the pressure reaches forty pounds it stops. So simple, so dependable and so cheap is this little engine that many a farmer has put it in. They all speak well of it.

Doubly reassuring, however, in the midst of these changes is the fact that we have not burned our bridges behind us. All the old facilities are still with us. There is a little electric cooker, but the old range stands fast, a little rusty in spots, but on the job. The oil stove for quick action has not been taken away. The new boiler stands in the cellar, but the range tank offers us hot water whenever we will it. The bathroom, all white and glistening, is ready on the second floor, but the red-bordered white bowl and pitcher, soap-dish and mug, keep the place of honor on our bed-room wash stand. We can get a drink down cellar, upstairs or in the kitchen, but still the water trickles by the back door, purified, chilled and carbonated in some inner laboratory of old Mother Nature, inviting us out into the sunshine or to see the stars.

All the old things that we appreciate and love are still with us except the kitchen sink. That is now in process of dismantlement. Not a Pollyanna on earth could find much good to say of that sink. It is so low hung as to break one's back bending over. It is dull and dingy, bereft of paint, rather disgusting. Always it prefers to keep back part of the water it is supposed to discharge, and frequently it keeps it all. Was there ever such a sink to gurgle and gulp, to back

up, to leak, to overflow? Ordinary sinks show some little appreciation when one pokes into them with a long wire. Not this sink. It catches the wire every six inches down its drain pipe. It turns the crook the wrong way. It utterly refuses to heed the kindest poking. As for blowing into it with a short piece of hose, it is like the Irishman's horse which needed condition powders. "Didn't you blow down the tube, Pat?" said the doctor. "Oi did," said Pat, "but, be jabbers, the horse blew first." I reached the point where I utterly refused to blow into this sink to clear it. As for slapping the full down spout vigorously with the flat hand, to convey energy suddenly through water to the point needed, let him try it who will. My day is done.

As I set down these words in bitter mood and keen sense of outrage and wrong, a truck drove up, and "Tiny" pointed to a clear white sink with beautiful wash basin and shiny draining board. It was the last of our new fixtures, long delayed but at hand in a crisis.

And as if he wanted me always to have a special feeling about this sink, Tiny refused to take pay for bringing it. He had another load, he said, and "just set it on." Such a spirit is utterly priceless anywhere, but especially when it shows itself in the neighborhood where one lives.

We realize of course that our temporary depression over our improvements is only natural. Always there are the tides of the spirit. We are up and then we are down.

We must expect the ebb as well as the flood tide in our lives. John Coleman Adams emphasized this a generation ago in one of his most charming essays.

"Hold fast, then," we say to ourselves when we get a little blue. "The cause may not be in the situation. It may be in us. We are tired, or that last

cup of coffee was one too many. Let us wait for the turn of the tide."

So far the tide always has turned—in our hearts as on the beach. We feel that there are other cosmic forces besides the moon pulling on the job. From somewhere a full deep tide of cheer and courage comes flooding in.

August 26, 1930.

CHAPTER VIII

ALL KINDS OF WOOD FOR THE FIRE

NOTHING symbolizes so completely the unity of the family as the open fire. It comes down to us from early times. About the fire our forefathers gathered for warmth. By it they cooked. In its light sometimes they read. It was gas, electricity, coal and coal oil combined. In a mountain climate, even in the lower mountains of the northern Catskills, there are more nights in summer when a little fire is welcome than there are when it is a superfluity. Especially when it turns cool after one of our super-heated periods such as we had in July and August of this year, we appreciate the light and cheer and warmth of our fire.

In a previous chapter, I recorded the fact that much of our fuel at the farm is wood picked up about the place. The wagon-house and old hog-pen are full of chunks of beech and maple, but somehow it seems extravagant to burn such wood in the summer when one does not absolutely need a fire and when one lights it mainly for pleasure. So I have formed the habit on the last lap of a walk of picking up anything in sight that might make fuel and carrying it home.

Two of the best of our fires came from the repairing of our bridge. A hundred yards down the hill from the farmhouse Stony Creek crosses the highway. The road is carried over the creek by one of the ordinary plank and stringer bridges so common in the country. The weight of trucks and wagons, loads of hay and loads of people, is borne here by seven logs about a foot in diameter and twenty feet long resting

on abutments of creek stone, laid up without mortar. The stringers support planks which make the roadbed. Once in a while one of the planks begins to give way, and somebody gets down and looks under. There he may see, as our neighbor George saw, an abutment bulging out. The next step is to telephone the Town Overseer in Summit, and he and his gang soon come down and repair the bridge. Before any operations are undertaken a clean board is borrowed of the nearest neighbor, which is "the undersigned," and a sign nailed up: "Bridge unsafe. Proceed at your own risk." This is "so the town won't be liable," we are told, if we break our necks.

A single Saturday sufficed to make the bridge safe. But no road gang back in the hills away from the State Road cleans up its mess. Our little creek was choked with debris. What attracted my attention especially were great pieces of hemlock bark which had come away from the logs. Getting down I fished it out of the water and laid it up to dry. A day or two later I carried it up and piled it alongside our new chimney, where I could find it in the dark. It made quite a wood pile, and from this pile on cool evenings I built three or four of the best fires that we have had. The bark burned freely with a red flame, almost as if pitch were in it, and by drawing a bit of smoke out, we got the most delicious woods odor.

Before such a fire one thinks naturally of the part that hemlock has played in our history—how common the wood is in our section, how beautiful the trees, especially when young, and how valuable the bark once was for tanning. Time was when the part of the tree that we were burning was all that men wanted of the hemlock. They stripped trees and carried great loads of bark to the tanneries. Now both the animals which gave their pelts, and the trees which furnished the bark to be a preservative of the pelt,

have gone. The trees can come back, but not the wild life of these hills. We are not complaining about it. We do not want to roll back the chariot of progress. We prefer civilization to barbarism, but we can not burn hemlock bark, even that dragged from a creek bed, without a feeling that we are using something precious which is needed by man.

We had less compunction about the old guard rail of the bridge. It was an unusually large hop pole. The chances are ten to one that it came off our farm in the first place. The chances are five to one that our neighbor George put it up. At any rate, its work done, it lay under our plum trees where some one had flung it out of the way. I brought this up and sawed it in four-foot lengths for the fireplace. It, too, served its day and generation. In fact, town overseers often are more particular about guard rails than they are about planking. The guard rail may not be able to hold the weight of a child, but it must be up if the town is not to be sued and beaten because of an accident. And it does serve as a warning when the bright beams of a headlight strike it. Especially in a bridge set as ours is set, at an angle and at the foot of a long steep hill, the guard rail is the first thing a motorist will see, and it is bound to be the thing he will hit if he does not quickly shift his wheel. Free guard rails, the property of the town of Summit, free planking, free hemlock bark, what provision for future fires we can make at our Stony Creek Bridge! Nobody in this state that I know of, except Italians living along railroad tracks and gathering cinders, and little boys in crowded cities picking up empty boxes, gets fuel in the way that we do. So nobody can fling the taunt: "Why take the fuel away from poor folks?" The poorest folks around wouldn't have it. Only some one with a little streak of madness would gather it.

From the sills and posts of the wagon-house under repair, we got many fine chunks for the fire. Some of it was too far gone and was hauled to the big meadow to be burned "after the next rain" or "the next Democratic victory." One of our men expressed the opinion that "one would come as quick as the other" as things now looked. It was on a hot cloudless day that he said it. But what we did not haul away was piled up for me to dispose of. This too was hemlock—over half a century old. How it burned! It was all more or less "dozy"—that is rotten and worthless for lumber. I can not find "dozy" in any dictionary.* I do not know how to spell it. But dozy admirably expresses the state of the timbers which came out from under the old hog-pen. One might think fire made from the hog-pen might not enable us to see visions and dream dreams. But no hogs had been kept there for twenty years. And why should we not be able to give a kindly thought as the flames crackle to the porkers who served their day and generation? Especially when one is living where he does not go to market every day, and when crisp fragrant bacon fills many a gap, one ought to think appreciatively of the hog and of the breeders who have developed it.

With all kindly feeling for hogs, however, the author of these meditations will never advocate penning them above the foundation sills of large and heavy buildings constructed for other purposes. Hogs should live by themselves. And probably this is true of all kinds of hogs.

About twenty years ago the *Outlook* published essays by Elizabeth Woodbridge called the Jonathan Papers. Afterward they were republished in two volumes. One of the chapters in the first series was

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*Dozy. So decayed as to be soft and useless: said of trees and timber.—*Standard Dictionary.*

called "In the Firelight." It contained this passage which I have remembered and thought about for years:

"To get the full flavor of a fire, you must know your wood—I had almost said, you must remember where the tree stood before it was cut—white birch on the dry, worn-out slopes, black birch from the edges of the pasture lots, chestnut from the ledges, maple from the swamps, apple from the old orchards, oak cut in sorrow when the fullness of time has come and burned with the honor due to royalty."

All these kinds of wood except chestnut at one time or another have filled our wood basket. Farther south we have burned many a chunk of dead chestnut. Our maples at the farm, however, are sugar maples, not swamp maples. Our black birches are few in number. Our oaks are seldom cut.

Elizabeth Woodbridge cleverly characterized the flame made by these different woods—"the quick blaze" of the birch, "the quiet, unobtrusive blaze" of oak and maple for the long evening of reading when one does not want to be disturbed, the "reluctant but steady" blaze of the black birch, the "cheerful and willing" blaze of the apple.

"For a fire to sit before with friends, bring in the apple wood," she says. "Lay the great back log, the more gnarled the better, and if there is a hole through which the flames may shoot up, that is best of all—such logs we hoard for special occasions. . . . There is a fire for friends."

I always burn the maple with reluctance. It is so clean and hard. It makes me think it ought not to have been cut down. With the apple it is quite different. The dead limbs of old apple trees stick up on all sides of the house. When the old limbs come off it gives the trees a new lease of life. When an old tree comes down, a young one takes its place. A few

dead limbs, the Madame says, must never come down. They are the favorite places of many different birds. A bare topmost branch of the seckel pear, just below the side porch, has held not only the robin and catbird, but the indigo, the Baltimore oriole, the redstart, the hummingbird and the chippie and song sparrow—not once but over and over again. One year the rose-breasted grosbeak sat there—a day to be remembered.

Also to get the full flavor of a fire one ought to be physically tired. In town, with nerves taut and muscles soft, the fire renders service in relaxing the tension. It is a soporific. But to really enjoy the fire the nerves should be carefully hidden and forgotten, and the muscles not exhausted but tired. In town this feeling comes after a long tramp. On the farm, one can get it best by picking stone for a new foundation or the new bridge of a barn. And if one has to face a storm for the last hour or two of his day, the pleasure of the fire is doubled. As the wind shakes the house, as the rain beats on the window-panes, one settles down with an inexpressible sigh of satisfaction. During this hot dry summer now almost over we have had few storms, but we have had the satisfaction often of coming out of the darkness tired and in just the mood for the fire.

Before the fire one thinks about the same things that he usually thinks about—work, books, people, the daily round, and himself—but he thinks in a different way—more gently, more calmly, perhaps more wisely. The flames seem to smooth down the rough edges of the soul as they do of metal. The other side of a disputed question comes slowly into view, as one sits there, almost as if the problem were a roast on a spit. And if the mind has been dwelling on a discouraging problem, the fire seems to throw a new and hopeful light on it.

The andirons generally come in for some attention. They are such faithful aiders and abettors of a good blaze. The pair we brought to the farm stood in our first home in Washington. The upright standard at the end terminates in a single brass ball. I like them because they look like the pictures of andirons or fire-dogs in the old Webster dictionary, and also because I helped pick them out.

The tongs and shovel of twisted brass are rather unusual. They go back to the Madame's childhood. In her family there was an old Dutch Bible published at Dordrecht, or Dort, in Holland. She especially liked family history and tradition. So once when staying at The Hague her father took her to old Dordrecht for the day. In an antique shop they were attracted by this fire set. The wife of the shopkeeper waited on them. She was a striking looking woman of unusual type, with jet black hair and blue eyes. Sometimes when the flickering shadows play on the little shovel and tongs, we see this father and daughter in the shop and bearing away their prize. We wonder at the pilgrimage that these useful ornaments of our fireplace have made over the seas, and at the chances and changes which at last let them serve us up in these hills.

Often we read by the fire, and then old John Adams sits with us, or John Quincy, or Charles Francis, or Charles Francis Jr., and they tell us of their experiences in the past two hundred years. Or we may have hold of Fisher's Bryce, and we think the great Scotchman's thoughts after him.

And—must I confess it—half the time we have been congratulating ourselves upon our new fireplace. To hear us one would think that never had there been such a fireplace constructed anywhere. It is perfect to us. One friend would have built it of the cobblestones so numerous here. Anotherwould have had a

little recess under the mantel. A third would have bought an old crane and had it built into the brickwork. But not we. All these may be very well, but see what we have! "It has completely changed this room." "It isn't a camp now, it's a home." "Did you ever realize before how large this room was?" "How foolish people are who do not make fireplaces large enough!" "How well the clock looks there." So we talk as the flames leap up and then slowly die down. It is all very new, but there is no appearance of newness. Father's old pipe and tobacco jar, much as he left them, stand on the new mantel as they did on the old wooden mantel now moved upstairs. He is especially associated with this place, for he discovered it for us and busied himself about it when the rest of us scoffed at it. Let the old pipe lie there! It looks good to us.

There is a magic about the firelight. Elizabeth Woodbridge says that it lights up all the lovely bits of the room, and "about the unlovely ones it throws a thick mantle of shadow." Then she adds: "Nor does the firelight magic end here. Not only does it play about the fair hours of our past, making them fairer, it also vaguely multiplies them so that for one real occurrence we see many."

So may it be with all of us. Whatever the literal moralists may think of us in the firelight, let us magically multiply our good times—the good traits of our friends, and all the good hopes we have—and let us give to the flames all the others, to be whirled up the chimney and over the hills and far away.

When this chapter appeared in the *Christian Leader*, a friend in Pennsylvania sent to the office "The Sacrament of Fire," by John Oxenham, which begins as follows:

> Kneel always when you light a fire!
> Kneel reverently and thankful be

For God's unfailing charity,
And on the ascending flame inspire
A little prayer, that shall upbear
The incense of your thankfulness
For this sweet grace
Of warmth and light!
For here again is sacrifice
For your delight.

In lovely lines the poet describes how God "shrined the sunshine," and "enwombed the stores of light and heat" within the wood, within the peat that drank the life of the moor, within the coal "where forests lie entombed." Then he closes with these great words:

These all have died that you might live;
Yours now the high prerogative
To loose their long captivities,
To give them new sweet span of life
And fresh activities.

August 16, 1930.

CHAPTER IX

WORK ON THE FARM

OUR place is not much of a farm viewed from a farmer's standpoint. We have no horses, cows, sheep, pigs or chickens. We seldom sow any grain. We do not even plant potatoes every year. The pastures have been given over to trees and the woods are too steep to reach without great labor. The meadows are still devoted to their legitimate agricultural purposes, and give us from twenty to thirty loads of hay a year. They ought to be plowed, limed, fertilized and reseeded, but we have not got to this. The place is used as a summer home, and other things are incidental.

We have no regular hired man. We get help by the day as we need it. One of our nearest neighbors, with a small farm, lives where he can keep an eye on the place for us, and he helps us the most frequently.

So, while there is almost a limitless amount of work to do around the place, it is not work that has to be done on the minute, or work that I have to do personally.

I like farm work. After a year in the office, it is great fun to get out on the land or into the woods and take some small part in what is going on. When I came up this year, however, I was not in any mood for work. The men were busy in the hay, and I let them struggle through it without once driving the horse-rake or taking hold of a fork. Of course there was work which had to be done which I did not mind. To get wood and water, to help with the cooking, is real sport, whether one is in the north woods or at

THE SOUTH PORCH WHERE WE REST AFTER WORK

the farm. Picking berries is fun, too, but the Madame did most of this work before I had a chance at it.

My real interest in working personally came when we started to build a road and a bridge for the wagon-house, now turned into a garage. We had expected to lay down heavy planks to drive over, as men have done here for years. But George, Tiny and Alva, who had put the new concrete foundations under the wagon-house, had a different notion. They said: "Make a sill of concrete. Then you will have something that will stay with you." So Tiny, who goes to town every day with the milk for half the valley, brought up the sand and cement. Then they started after stone. To my surprise I here began my real summer work. It was delightful to follow the heavy team across the high fields, to load the wagon from some fallen stone wall, to watch the intelligent horses hold the load back going down the hill, to pitch the stones in the place to be filled. All this was only a part of it. There were all kinds of stones. Some were flat pieces of slate broken from the strata which crop out at this height. Others were hard heads, or boulders, a glacial deposit—white from quartz, red from iron, green from hornblende. Occasionally we struck a piece of limestone full of fossils.

Such beautiful stones as we found! Many were far too heavy for me, but the men singly or together picked up stones weighing well over 200 pounds. These stones lay in thickets of wild cherry and choke-cherry, hidden away under raspberry bushes, and—shall I confess it—covered with poison ivy! At my suggestion we avoided the worst of the poison ivy, and I washed with strong yellow soap when I came in, so that I did not have my usual set-to with this dread inflammation.

How curiously the wheel of time revolves! Once

the stone walls were the main fences in this hollow. They were built for two reasons—one to find a place to put the stones taken off the lots, the other to get the fencing needed. What labor was involved in making them! How beautiful they were! Even in ruins they give a picturesque touch to this whole region. When wire became cheap it became easier for a farmer to run a wire along a fallen wall than to straighten it up. So no more walls were laid, or even repaired. Now we have moved on into an age of concrete. Practically all stone is good stone if it is near by. When farmers want a base for concrete they go to their own fields. When the road gang wants stone for the crusher, they arrange to take stone walls along the route where they propose to work. They pound down the big stones for a base and throw the others into the crusher for the other layers of the road.

All these things we discussed as we tossed and tumbled and rolled and lifted the stones for our load. Once in a while a tiny snake would be routed out from his snug berth under a stone, blue or black or brown or spotted. We let them slip away unmolested. It has been a hard dry summer for the snakes, and they are coming down from the upper hills for water.

Under the bombardment of boulders, the hollows were filled up and the approach to the wagon-house took form. For the concrete work I furnished the water, filling the buckets from our flowing well as they were emptied, and letting the men stick closely to their job. They ran wire through the soft material so that it would not "check," as they called it—that is crack in drying.

Then we took two teams and went up the "Dugway," or Eminence road, for slate. We found it slow digging, and I made a quick trip to town for dynamite. A stick or two at a time loosened the slate

and gave us all we needed. My labors at the slate were strictly limited to shoveling a little of the finer. It was the place where we got it that appealed to me—a narrow mountain road in the woods, some distance above our hollow. And the afternoons that we were up that road the sun shone on that side of the mountain, fell on the road and bushes in golden patches, and showed us the first of the asters and goldenrod. Coming out of the woods on our descent we had magnificent views of our hills and our hollow and bits of other valleys miles away. We went to our high fields for stone, to the mountain for slate, and to our Stony Creek for gravel. All the road building material we needed was near by.

So proud were we of the approach to the front doors of the wagon-house, so much in the mood for road building, that we rehung the back doors, cleaned away a dump of glass, tin cans, limbs and rotten wood behind the wagon-house, and put a retaining wall, a fill, and a concrete sill there also, so that we could drive straight through and out again.

I don't know whether I was more pleased with the new sills and drive or with getting rid of the tin cans at the back of the wagon-house. Both gave me the keenest delight.

It was September by the time the sills were finished, and the moon was riding high. Several nights we went out after dinner to sit on our new concrete sill and watch the moon slowly come up above the dark wooded slopes of Pine Mountain. Resting thus we caught something of the inner meaning of labor—the many agencies that co-operate to make a success of any project. We saw that if it be true work it must be for those who are to come after us as well as for ourselves. And what a different feeling one has for any undertaking, even a new sill for a wagon-house, up in the hills, in which he has

helped. One never tastes the true sweets of possession who never labors himself.

On our trips we often found large flat stones perfect for stepping stones. When the grading in the back-yard was finished, the Madame and I placed these stones to lead to the outside cellar doors and to the new woodshed in the basement of the wagon-house—the Madame being the architect and I the engineer. Truth compels me to state that the age-long feud between architects and engineers flared up even here, the Madame maintaining that a curved line was the line of beauty and I rejoining hotly, "Let there be curves but not futile ones." With the help of consultants from the far ends of the country we reached middle ground, where the Madame got her curve and I got a short path over which to stagger with my arms full of wood.

Another task that I attacked with enthusiasm was filling the ditches dug for the new water supply for the house. The long, slow digging and shoveling to make the ditches, the splitting of stones too heavy to lift, the laborious getting down through hard-pan, were not exactly my kind of work. But the rolling the stones back, the shoveling the earth down, the putting the yard in order—that was a different story. This was no long, laborious toiling down a long back stretch. This was coming down the home-stretch with a rush. And yet I realized that there would be little progress made in this world if there were not men ready and willing to do the long pecking away at the deeply imbedded boulders and the hard-packed clay.

Of building the fires I have written. But before fires can be built on the hearth some one must cut the wood. I had to miss a day on the mountain getting out wood for the winter, which I had been promised by one of our helpers, because we could not get to it.

This man, who has an engine and cross-cut saw up in his woods, not only cuts his own wood but supplies the schoolhouse and some of his neighbors. He does not butcher his woods, but cuts only what ought to come out. And yet he has hard work to keep up with what he ought to cut. For these farmers have more than one kind of thing to do. But though I could not get out the wood, I had real exercise moving and piling some of the wood that we had accumulated in years past. Most of it had been dumped in the wagon-house to get it under shelter with the least labor possible, and it lay up against the back door of the wagon-house from floor to ceiling. The moment the new wood cellar in the basement of the building was ready, I said we had better take up the planks in the floor and drop the wood down. It was easier said than done. The planks had been put down to stay. We soon saw that we would ruin a solid old floor. So I engaged a half-grown boy and we tackled the job in a new way. I piled it on a wheelbarrow, wheeled it out on the new bridge, dumped it over, and he picked it up and carried it in. Wood showed up that we had forgotten all about. Down beneath a mass of apple wood we came upon hard maple that one of my brothers had bought five years ago.

When we got ready to clear up the back side of the wagon-house, we had to dispose of a mass of limbs and tree trunks that had been thrown there to get them out of the way, hoping that some day we could "work them up."

I helped a little at this job with the cross-cut saw. We cut the wood into three and three and one-half foot lengths for the fireplace, which made less sawing necessary. But what a collection we had! Red cedar and white cedar, hop-poles sound at heart in spite of twenty years' exposure to the elements, plum trees that had become infested with black knot,

limbs from the big butternut, chokecherry and wild cherry, one mountain maple, a white ash that fell into Stony Creek, a balm of Gilead that obstructed the view, a mulberry winter-killed or killed by the yellow-bellied sapsucker, apple, pear and peach, and one splendid hemlock prop that had held our cellar wall up for five years after it had begun to cave in. There was a lesson in woods along with the sawing, and also there was much history of the place.

I understand now why men like to work in the woods in the winter time. There is snow on which to move the logs, and there is cold, bracing weather for the work. Besides there is time in the winter for such work. Sawing, chopping, carrying, piling wood for a fire, is such warm work that almost it dispenses with the necessity for a fire. But not altogether, and not at all with the joy of a fire. Rather, the personal interest one has in each log deepens immeasurably the joy one takes in the shooting flames. The work would help us if help were needed, to see visions and dream dreams.

There are many tasks about a farm which can not be foreseen and never can be classified. For example, we got word that two people would be with us for our last night at the farm, stopping over on their way from a summer in Massachusetts to a winter in Tennessee. This meant that the windows in the front room upstairs would have to be opened. These windows are regular devils anyway. They are only sixteen or eighteen inches high, with a single sash. They have to be closed with hammer and nails and opened with jimmies and profanity. Since they last were opened the house has been painted, and the paint had run under like concrete to reinforce the nails. Luckily, our main helper is a carpenter, and he got them opened and out. Also he got orders to plane them, equip them with catches and fix them to

slide up. A well-known devout man was coming for the night, with a wife theoretically at least equally devout. The Madame went up to prepare the room and came back reporting hundreds of wasps. Here was another of those farm jobs no one could foresee, or, foreseeing, could catalogue. I dashed in and got away with it. My success was due to the fact that it was a crisp autumn morning and the wasps were sluggish. My technique was to seize each wasp about the middle and toss him out of the window. How the slender abdomen curved around! How he stung my pocket handkerchief! Wasps in clusters, wasps seriatim, wasps puzzled, wasps mad—they all were meat for my pocket handkerchief, but all flew when I tossed them out into the warm sunshine.

I picked two or three out of the holy man's bed. Should one have left them in order to test his holiness? No, we wanted him to come again. These wasps also went out of the window. Two or three escaped and went under his bed. Lucky escape, for they led me to a tack on the bare floor which might have been his downfall. A wasp hunt is exciting, and might be highly exciting. In fact, later, as I drew my handkerchief out of my pocket to wipe my heated brow, a wasp buzzed away just before I wiped with him.

With all that we have done—how much remains to do! We look down the vista of the years and see shrubs to be planted, a garden to be made, trees to be trimmed, and trees to be sprayed, too, if we want sound fruit, useless fields to be reforested, damp meadows to be ditched, our lovely wooded gorge near the house to be cleared of the dead limbs that men have dumped into it for generations.

If the Madame were writing this chapter she would have a different story to tell—of rugs put

down, and curtains put up, of pictures hung and of rooms made beautiful with the wild flowers that people usually call weeds, and with ferns from a store in the deep woods that seems inexhaustible.

To both of us there has been work that has been more or less monotonous. We have had our share of cleaning and dusting and dish washing. But much of the work has been play. It has brought health and happiness. It has fitted us better to do the other work in the great city to which God seems to have appointed us.

September 17, 1930.

CHAPTER X

WALKS WITH MOTIVES

THERE is no such thing as a poor walk, but some walks are better than others. Where one goes, what one sees, whom one meets, and the company one is in, have something to do with the enjoyment of a walk, but how one feels, what one thinks and whether one wills to go have much more to do with it.

In some moods an aimless walk is the most enjoyable, but in other moods a motive gives added zest.

Strolling out after dinner in a strange city, one likes to look in shop windows, wander around the common, if there is one, or go over a bridge.

If one is in a city where it is possible, a walk over one bridge and back over another, looking at the lights of the city and watching the reflections in the water, proves the right kind of walk for the close of day. Over the Thames in London, over the Seine in Paris, or over Rock Creek in Washington, and back, is walk enough for after dinner. Over the Ohio at Cincinnati, over the Charles River Basin in Boston, over the East River in New York, or over the Potomac in Washington, is too much to do if one is to look for a different bridge to return by. Such are strenuous walks of an hour or so, not the leisurely stroll which the French call a "*promenade de digestion.*"

This story to-day, however, deals with walks that have objectives. Obviously I can not list them all, for they are as many as there are human interests. The objective may be a call or a series of calls, or to study ferns and wild flowers. It may be to look over

the farm and see how the young stock is getting along, or it may be to pick wild strawberries. It may be to climb a mountain and get a view, or it may be to buy a dozen eggs of a neighbor. Practically all these things have been motives of walks that we have taken at the little hill farm. We have no stock, other than woodchucks, rabbits, foxes, squirrels, chipmunks, field mice, and birds, but even this stock keeps us both busy. The objective of one walk is often a by-product of another walk. The objectives on some walks get all mixed up together. Still, it gives order to one's thinking to have a special thing in view when one starts out.

One of the best walks always at the farm is to explore the glen and to climb old Cobble. The glen, I have frequently explained in these chapters, is a narrow gulch between two mountains, and Cobble is one of the mountains which watches over the hollow where our farmhouse is built.

To people interested only in Kanchanjunga, Mount Everest or Jonsong, Cobble would seem like a mole-hill. The climbing of Cobble and the climbing of Jonsong are not in the same class. One is a little over 2,100 feet high and the 24,340 feet high. To climb Jonsong one has to take months for preparation, assemble a large party, establish a series of supporting camps, and even then it is a gamble with death. To climb Cobble—well, let us tell in an orderly way about it.

One has spent the night at Cobleskill, perhaps in a vain search for paper-hangers who will come at once. One comes up alone to see about the electricians who are expected to finish their job, leaving the Madame to come on the afternoon trip. One discovers as he drives along that the sky is blue, the air clear and conditions perfect. Morning's at seven too as he drives into the farmyard. All the preparation

necessary for the climb is to unlock the door, prop it open for the workmen, put the car out of the way, get a drink of our cold spring water, set the ice in the ice box and the chops and peas on the ice, and start.

The route is across the road into the tall timothy grass, down to Stony Creek and up the east branch to the glen, then out of the glen by some stiff climbing on to a shoulder of Pine Mountain, and so over to the summit of Cobble.

The sun made me wonder if it were the kind of day one ought to take for a stiff climb, but the shade made me know that the day was perfect. Soon I was in a high pasture following a cow path along the creek. On my right the fields sloped straight up Cobble, the pastures all glorious with sweetbrier roses. On my left were the wooded slopes of Pine Mountain. The scarlet tanager, never more scarlet, was singing in his white ash, the bobolinks and meadow larks were still active, the indigo bird sang on the dead branch of a poplar, and Maryland yellow-throats were everywhere.

Repeatedly I scared up the woodchucks, but they did not act panic stricken. Every one of them stopped at the entrance to his burrow to see what I proposed to do, and one went under the fence into the woods and sat watching me until I was out of sight.

Probably a hundred wild things watched me furtively of whose presence I never dreamed.

There was a wild bull in the lot I was crossing, which treed his owner last fall and kept him prisoner for several hours, but I was ignorant of this fact and passed on undisturbed. Perhaps my ability to run and climb makes me more or less indifferent to such animals anyway.

The pasture gradually narrowed as I climbed the gentle grade, and then ended. I was in the woods between the two mountains. I had still a level place

to walk on under the pines and beeches, and many a stump and log invited me to rest. Soon a flutelike note reached me, and I sat down to listen to Thoreau's favorite singer, the wood thrush, up the mountainside, but so near that I could hear the buzzy note between the two lovely liquid parts of the song. There is something wonderfully cool and refreshing in the music of the wood thrush. It is one of the purest sounds in nature.

But there was harsher music near by. I disturbed a jay. She was nesting, I assume, for if ever objurgations, expletives, and old-fashioned Schoharie County swear words smote the air, they came from this jay as I walked under her tree. So also with a hawk. So also with another wild bird whose note I did not know. The glub, glub, glub of a cuckoo stopped me, and I sat for a long time watching for this bird, but it never showed itself. Now I had left most of the daisies, the clover, the buttercups, behind. I was in the land of the jewelweed, the mints, the mosses, the ferns. The banks were so steep that I had to walk in the stream, safe enough for sedentary gentlemen if they watch their step. On such a walk there is much climbing over fallen trees, much crossing and recrossing to keep dry shod, steady climbing, part of the time, step by step up the outcropping ledges. Strange warblers detained me, but it was a tough job trying to put one's glass on them in such a place. Beeches, birches, poplars, many maples, came down to the very edge of the water. In places the sunlight fell through on the little pools and waterfalls, on banks of ferns, on little meadows of jewelweed. Soon all desire to hurry, to get back to the farm, to see the workmen, to return to Cobleskill, to write editorials, to answer letters, left me. I realized that I was in the midst of a perfect walk. I did not propose to hurry it. I did not care when I got back. If

the workmen did not know enough to put things where they belonged, they could come again. Such is the effect of our mountain air. The little baby trout were darting about the pools, the mountain stream was chuckling with delight, another tanager came down to see me, and the preacher bird (red-eyed vireo) kept up his long-winded harangue as if to get back at me in behalf of suffering congregations.

Up near the head of the gorge I broke away from the stream and went up the steep mountainside to the road, remembering the army rule as I pulled myself up, "a horse can go anywhere a man can go without using his hands." I decided a horse would have had trouble getting up that steep hillside. The country road to Eminence goes up the side of Pine Mountain and over the ridge between Pine and Cobble. I followed it out of the woods and then left it and started up high pastures to the summit of Cobble. Here I found a series of wild strawberry beds. In one place I came upon the most perfect rock garden I have ever seen: outcropping ledges of dark gray shale bearing strawberry plants heavily laden, on top, on both flanks of the rock and in many a mossy crevice. I had a second breakfast of berries, large, dead ripe and especially aromatic. And eat as I might I made no impression on the garden. I left the color scheme as perfect as I found it. And this rock garden, or lunch counter, had easy seats of rock, cushioned with moss, and it furnished views almost straight down into a deep wooded valley.

Near the top of Cobble going through another little wood I got my glass on one of the warblers that had been puzzling me, but I could not be sure about him. We have found the Canadian up here. and from my description the Madame thought it was the Canadian that I saw.

Also near the mountain top I came upon father

and mother oven-bird leading their brood from the nest. It was a most interesting little touch.

There is no use in attempting a description of the view from old Cobble. I have tried it many times and failed. There is a large boulder in the grassy field on top against which one can lean as he rests. And while he does not have a far view for the whole of the circle, he does for most of the way around. It is far off to the north, northwest and northeast and far off to the south, southwest and southeast. It is to the Adirondack country one way and to the Catskill country the other way. It is over a large part of our own hilly country and into other counties and states. I always look the longest at the mountains to the southeast that command the Hudson, the John Burroughs country and the Rip Van Winkle country. And then there is something inexpressibly beautiful about the deep valleys that lead back home—the farmhouse almost under the mountain and the home village, Cobleskill, resting under its maples and elms, in another valley seven or eight miles away.

On this particular walk I made a beeline home straight down, taking long steps over meadow and pasture, until I hit the west branch of Stony Creek. Here an indigo bunting with an abbreviated song detained me until I could locate him and make sure of what he was.

Then, climbing up through another pasture full of brier roses, I reached the road which passes our house and had firmer footing home.

The motive for two of the best walks so far this summer was nothing more than a desire to climb two of my favorite mountains near Cobleskill village, and the other day up Donats, south of the village. Once or twice each year I must make these climbs. The mountains rise only a few hundred feet above the valley floor, but they furnish good exercise, lead one

THE VIEW FROM OLD COBBLE TO THE NORTH

on and on indefinitely into wilder places, and are associated with climbs made very often when I was a boy.

I went up Shanks on the morning of the Fourth of July, and although I was away from the house in Cobleskill only two hours it was about the best celebration of the "Fourth" that I ever had. There is a path along the face of the mountain half way up like a terrace, and this gives views of the valley and of the village. From here up the mountain is wooded. Having learned so well the song of the veery at the farm, I recognized it instantly as I reached the edge of the wood. Two veeries were in full song, making the welkin ring. Up on top of the first summit as I was sitting on an old log the tanager came up close to me without a sound. Farther over on the second summit I sat down for some time to listen to the wood thrush. One has to make all he can of the thrush music, for it is soon over. One hears the thrushes only infrequently in this latitude after the middle of July.

The walk up Donats was in this wise: We came down to Cobleskill one hot July afternoon and I left the car to be serviced. There were three hours before we could start back, and although it was 90 degrees in the shade I made for the old mountain south of the village. It is the steepest climb anywhere around, but the upper half is wooded. Instead of taking the slanting path I went straight up the steep pasture to the woods. This was all young growth where I entered it, this part of the mountain having been lumbered over a few years ago. Beech, birch, ironwood, basswood, had sprung up fast, and underfoot it was a wonderful fernery all the way to the top. What we call the top is not really the top, for the mountains keep rising until well above 2,000 feet. One needs both feet and both hands here, also, to

climb where I went up. The view of the valley and of the country to the north well repays one for the effort. But there is something more than view. There is rest after toil. There is the cool mountain breeze on a torrid summer day. There is soft dry fine grass to lie on and relax completely. There are easy wood roads to stroll over, which now and then come out where one can get a view of some other deep quiet valley or some other view of our own valley, and which then curve back into wooded depths where only bits of sunlight come. And there are the surprises. Always on walks there are surprises. That is what makes them so fascinating. On this day I saw a young northern pileated woodpecker fully grown, but not yet wary enough to keep out of the way.

I crossed one of the upper pastures to woods which ran still farther up the hill, for it was a day to keep in the shade. As I approached the fence I heard a wild cackling sound, and then through the shrubbery saw a large bird fly heavily out of one tree into another and disappear. I stole around quietly and to my amazement I saw the great woodpecker on a tall dead tree. He was hitching himself up, jump after jump, and gingerly using his powerful beak on the old bark. I watched him for five minutes. He did not know how to do it yet, but he knew that bark was something to explore. He let me come very close, watching me all the time with his sharp beady eye, and then with another cackle launched himself at a tree back in the woods. There was cackling back and forth for several minutes, probably by the older birds, but I did not see any of them again. That vivid red crest of this great bird long will linger in my memory. When I considered the size of his body and the amount of labor it must have taken to furnish grubs enough to build such a body, I mentally took off my hat to his parents.

It made me happy to think that this great showy bird still lives on Donats Mountain, so near my old home. He is such a mark that hunters almost always let fly at him. But the doctrine that one ought never to fire until he knows what he is firing at is slowly penetrating our consciousness, and with it the idea that our country will lose much of its picturesqueness if we exterminate our wild life. To see the great northern pileated woodpecker many people would travel a considerable distance. We ought to protect him.

August 4, 1930.

CHAPTER XI

DAYS WHICH STOOD OUT

ONE of the two longest days this year was Sunday and the other was Monday. One was spent mainly at Cobleskill, the other at the little hill farm. A somewhat detailed account of these two days may give a clear idea of the contrast between village and country life.

In Cobleskill there was much coming and going, at the farm hardly any.

In Cobleskill at least eight members of our two households went to church. At the farm the little church near by, like so many rural churches, was closed, and those who wanted to go to church had to motor to Richmondville, four miles away.

At Cobleskill there was a congregation of at least 300 people, many old friends, an address to make in the Sunday school. At the farm nothing to do but what I chose.

At Cobleskill the dinner was elaborate, complete, perfect of its kind. At the farm it was more or less improvised.

At Cobleskill the talk was of golf scores, parties at the Country Club, flower gardens at the high tide of the year, calls, school, sermons, local politics, business. At the farm it was about the scenery around us, the books on the table and the friends far away.

There is slight difference in the tap, tap, on the brain between city life and village life. The village is a kind of city. From it one can get into the country more quickly, but it is not the country.

Village people are blessed with gardens, and can

have the joy of planning, planting, cultivating, pruning, reaping, but some city people, at least in smaller cities, can do the same. But the abandoned farm in the hills, where nature has her own way, puts one into a totally different atmosphere.

Both Sunday in the village and Monday at the farm were delightful but different.

I must not give the impression that the village home, with its large garden, is not restful or beautiful. In some ways it is more beautiful. Down in the garden there are benches where one can sit close to the sweet-william, the yellow primroses, the ragged robins and delphiniums. The ruby-throated humming bird has a nest there. She sits on the aerial of our neighbor and looks down on us half the time. Finches, purple and gold, robins and orioles, sparrows, chipping, song and house, are always about, and the indigo bird generally is singing there.

Then the hills surrounding the valley may be seen from the garden, and there is peace always in lifting up one's eyes unto the hills. One must admit also that markets, mail carriers, sidewalks and society have their advantages.

Still, as I think of Monday, that other "longest day," I realize how complete is the rest at the farm in spite of all the work we have to do ourselves.

We came up early in the Ford. Not a cloud appeared in the sky until nightfall, and then filmy streamers began marching out of the west, the vanguard of clouds betokening a change. The deep blue above was accentuated by the masses of green around us, through which at times we watched the sky. How warm the sun was, and how cool the breeze. It was one of the days on which one had to be careful about moving too fast from sun to shade.

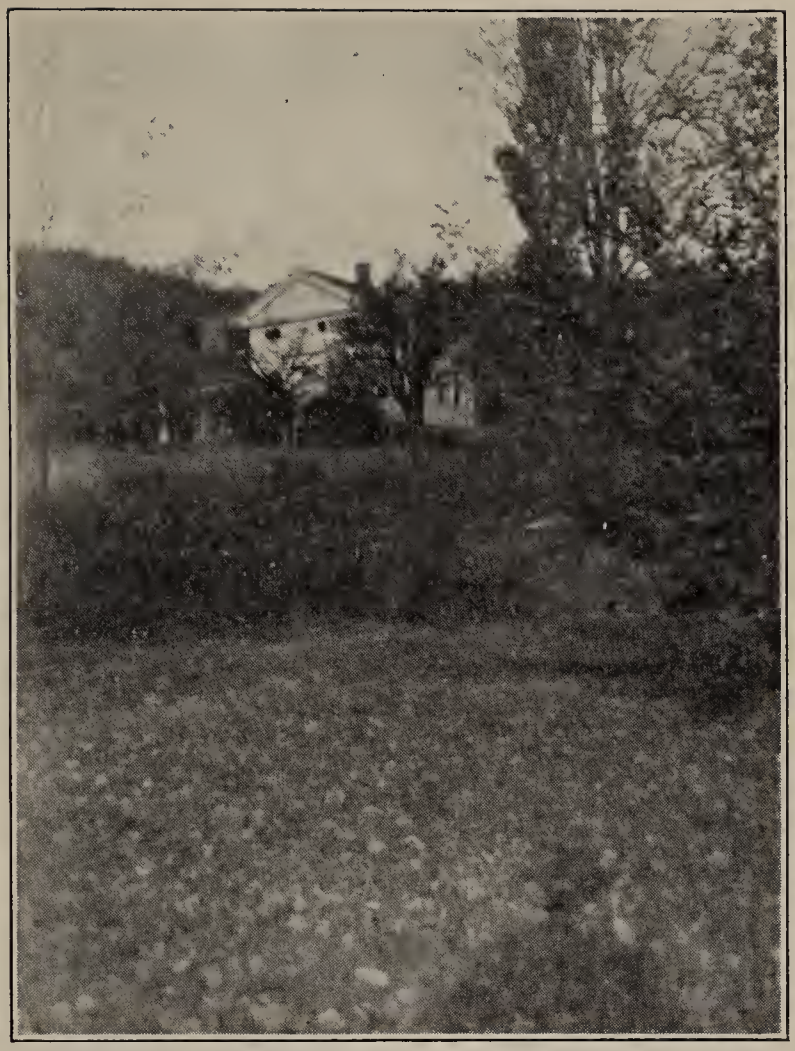
This longest day was divided between much sitting on the new porch and little walks in our own

fields, in grass "breast high," as the Madame called it, through beds of wild strawberries dead ripe, in nature's flower gardens of clover, buttercups and daisies, through the middle of sunny meadows and on the shady side of bushy fences.

Up the creek on either side there are gentle walks, gentle unless one tries to pass from one side of the stream to the other, and up the hills there are all manner of stiff walks that can be varied every day for the duration of one's stay.

Up the right bank of Stony Creek, the Madame was surprised to find that the land belonged to us. In this field we came upon some especially lovely mallows. She never had walked there before. And there where a long level meadow came to an end in a little thicket on a steep bank, we sat down to listen to the music of Stony Creek. The Madame was speaking of the scarlet tanager, and, as if he had heard her, he began his characteristic song, sweet but slightly rasping, close by. He did not wait to be discovered like most of his kind, who generally are hidden by dense foliage, but came out in the bright sunshine just above us on the limb of a white ash. His vivid color made even the glorious strawberries look a little dim.

Coming back, we started out again up the left bank (left and right of a stream of course are so designated descending) and walked along an old farm road now almost hidden by bushes. Here the vireos were tumbling around in the trees. Surprising a berry-picker, we saw her leap for the limb of a tree and swing over the fence, pail and all, with the agility of some wild creature of the glen. We did not know who she was, but she need not have run. It's back-breaking work to gather wild strawberries, but it has its compensations when one can pick them in such meadows, such flower gardens, such leafy bowers. And what Beecher said of God and strawberries may



AS SEEN FROM ACROSS THE CREEK

be paraphrased for strawberry jam: Woman might make better jam than wild strawberry, but she never has.

Finally we took a course at right angles with the stream up hill to strike the road, back which we came.

Resting under a clump of young hickories, the chestnut-sided warbler and Maryland yellow-throat paid us little visits. On up the hill we heard the indigo bird singing, and looking up we saw him sitting on one of the tall new poles of the electric light company. In this hill meadow there were many bobolinks. The Madame was not raised in a bobolink country, and has seen these birds heretofore mainly in migration. She was keenly interested to analyze the song, and the bobolinks showed off all they had. They sang as they swayed on weeds and bushes, they came to trees by which we were standing, they rose singing, dropped suddenly into the deep grass singing, and sat out on the new electric wires singing. The Madame said the harp is the instrument with which to compare the bobolink, that to call the song tinkling is not accurate unless the bird is off some distance, and to call it metallic is slanderous, A lady bobolink also came to see us, brown and strongly striped. It was hard for me to believe that the beautiful male, with his black breast, white back, and buffy neck and head, changes into her color in the fall.

So the second longest day moved on in peace and quiet to its close. We were back from our walk in time to have naps and start a real dinner, or supper, as most people call it in the country. In the oven of the oil stove we roasted a young chicken and baked potatoes to go with it. The peas, fresh from the garden, had come up with us from Cobleskill, and we gave them the kind of cooking they deserve, long and

slow and thorough, so that they just melt in the mouth. The Madame had crisped some lettuce for salad, and we had stewed apricots and strawberry jam for dessert. And this dinner was served out on the terrace, where we could watch the shadows creep up the hills to the east until only their tops were bathed in golden light. In such an hour, with such a dinner, one's optimism is deepened. Even the fierce shouts of our neighbor at his cows (a gentle-spoken man, that neighbor, when he speaks to us) came up the hollow softened by the setting. The far-off tinkle of a cow-bell came down to us from the glen where the young cattle were pastured. Our veeries gave a good-night call once or twice. Our dear little song sparrow came to his favorite perch and sang for all that was in him.

Far be it from me to imply that we always were able to command roast chicken, fresh peas, baked potatoes and strawberry jam. No, more than once we had a little cold meat, canned peas and no potatoes. But always we had the hills, almost always the sunset, and frequently the table on the terrace. There was to those open air meals a sense of abandon, of let go, of perfect ease, of peace and content, that made golden the moments of the longest day possible.

. . . . . .

On the thick soft grass that covers the top of Pine Mountain, my feet braced against a stone wall long since fallen down, the breeze and the sun at my back, sensitive ferns growing everywhere between the stones, the pasture thistle, St. Johnswort and everlasting nodding to attract attention, I passed an hour or two in the afternoon of the first day of August. The longest day was now almost six weeks behind. As we tore a page from the calendar that morning, it came to us with a shock that the summer was going. All day I had had a feeling that something precious

was slipping fast. Now from the mountain top I realized that I was looking off on a very different world than I had looked down upon in June. There were the same hills and ridges, the same high mountains off to the north and off to the south always beckoning one to come, the same valleys and hollows, the same strips and blocks and circles of forest covering the hills and running down into the hollows, the same roads climbing the hills and winding through the valleys, the same distant villages and scattered farmhouses, and the same fields, square, oblong and three-cornered. But in June everything was green. In August yellow had made its appearance, and brown was in evidence. In June I had looked down on the haying. Now in August it was the oat harvest. Although the season had been a dry one, at no time did we get burned up like the West or like our hollow the year before. Though the hayfields from the mountain looked brown and the oat fields golden, there was still much green. The wheat had not turned, the buckwheat was only half-grown, and the corn everywhere showed a thick growth and a vivid green. Corn depends on hot nights, and this summer we had many of them. No longer, in our part of the country, is it usually hilled and hoed, cut and stacked, picked, husked, and shelled. In a dairy country it is sowed, cut green like grass, chopped up and dumped into a silo to be kept green for milk cows all winter. In a dairy country, where much of the ready money comes from monthly milk checks, corn is an important crop. But let no one think that it is an easy crop, or that milk money is easy money. The farmer can not lie on the top of Pine Mountain, feet braced against an old stone wall, and think about it. By the fire in the winter sometimes he may find leisure to talk it over, but in the summer every day counts.

Though haying ought to be over this first of August,

I pick up with my field glasses some haymakers who are still at it. Up in the hills the calendar is not quite the same as down in the big valley. Down there we had seen reapers cutting wide swaths through the oats. Here on a slope of our mountain, I find the last of the haying. A pair of white horses makes a vivid patch of color way down below. With heavily laden rack they reach the barn. Then from the big barn door out they come steadily pulling the hay fork, and then slowly, uncertainly, half backing, half turning, they go back to do it again. Steady, steady, everlastingly keeping at it, from spring to fall, is the price the farmer pays for his crops. But is he very different from the rest of us? Steady, steady, it is the same with the preacher, the lawyer, the storekeeper, even the scribbler on the mountain-top or at his desk.

There are some things the wise farmer knows and accepts. He can not hurry the corn or buckwheat or hay. They take time. So must he. So must the wise scribbler. His harvest can not be gathered until it is ready. Always it is the same with men who work at books or who create beautiful works of art.

Henry Morton Robinson wrote not long ago in the *New York Times:*

> Corn does not hurry and the black grape swells
> In the slow cadence of all ripening things;
> Wise pumpkins idle, and the calm lake dwells
> In peace above her unimpetuous springs.
>
> What most unhurried, most full-flavorous is:
> The earth turns slowly and the tide stands still
> For him who surely claims, as truly his,
> Firm fruitage that no hasty blight can kill.

As farmers we are a little ashamed of our slowness getting in our own hay, but as ornithologists we are proud to think that we waited until all the young

bobolinks and meadow larks were safely out of the nest. No cruel mowing machine cut through their nests. And there are more farmers than one realizes whose very livelihood is tied up with success in haying, who take great pains to spare young birds.

What a day was this first day of August! What hours these on Pine Mountain! One sensed the fulness of the summer. The clouds, white and majestic, sailing in their sea of blue, were mid-summer clouds. The views far and near were mid-summer views.

In such a place one realizes how wild is our well settled region, how many the chances to be alone.

Is not this the way God planned it? Ought we not to want to be alone at times? Ought people to grow up in cities afraid to be alone in the woods or under the stars? I am not forgetting those who have no chance. God forbid! I am not felicitating myself on what I have that they have not. But there are so many who never learn that an old field, or abandoned pasture, or fallen stone wall, may be manna for the soul.

On the other side of this same mountain, on a road little traveled which runs through woods along the side of the mountain, the Madame saw a fox. He was not in a box or at the end of a rope, but wild and free. Shrewd fellow, he heard my car and waited until it passed. Then without a sound he stepped out into the road and watched it disappearing around a curve. Shrewd as he was, he did not know that we violate all rules, that the Madame actually prefers at times to walk, that she was coming almost as silently as a fox, picking the wild arrowroot and boneset. When he turned she stood there only ten feet away. Surprised, the fox never lost his aplomb. He regarded her for an instant and then without a sound slipped away into the bushes the way he was headed, and was

gone. John Burroughs has a sentence to the effect that the day on which he sees a fox is a day with a little different color to it than any other. My lawyer brother once saw a fox as he was driving to the farm at night, in the glare of his headlights. I never have seen one wild.

On this first day of August getting to my mountain-top, I did see more ferns than I supposed existed in the township. It was on a slope of this mountain where we almost never go. I crossed one high field after another until well around the mountain, and then I entered the woods. Eventually I struck an old wood road little used. The afternoon sun penetrated the woods, but the thick branches controlled his heat.

In spite of summer drought, it was damp and cool in the woods, and along this road the ferns grew with something of a tropical profusion. There were not merely clumps of ferns here and there, but beds of ferns, deep borders of ferns, masses and mounds of ferns. On the outskirts of the fernery were the coarser Christmas ferns, among them were tall brakes, but the mass was made up of the graceful New York fern and the delicate maidenhair. For half a mile I walked through ferns, then marked the spot with my eye as I turned off up the mountain, that I might get a few on my return.

Though ferns adorn the rock gardens of our cities and suburban places, and though we pick them often along country roads, we think mostly of remote places when we think of them—of woods visited infrequently, of cliffs in the woods where water slowly drips from rock to rock, of hillsides so steep we seldom climb them, and of wood paths such as that seen this August day, not easily found, not often traveled, but never forgotten if once traveled with eye open to their beauty.

September 21, 1930.

CHAPTER XII

JOSEPH'S VIEW AND VARIOUS THINGS

IN our part of the country it has been a wonderful season for seed-pods on the ash, the maple, and other trees, for wild cherries, chokecherries, nanny-berries and the berries we eat, for plums, cherries, pears and apples. It would not surprise us to have some of the migrant birds stay all winter, for in other years we have found robins at Christmas in the thickets of chokecherry.

It has been terribly dry, but, unlike last year, when berries dried up, these fruit-bearing bushes and trees have found moisture to mature their crops.

Between the house and the big barn, near the well that Uncle Billy dug and stoned up seventy years ago, but which we never have used, we have the largest clump of elderberry bushes in the country. Possibly the land near by was once part of the barnyard. At any rate it suits the elder. The elder thicket is fully thirty feet across, twelve or fourteen feet high in the middle, and is circular in shape. We reached the farm early enough this year to see it in blossom, and we stayed long enough to see it bowed with the weight of the beautiful purple berries. All the season it has been a thing of beauty, and a hiding place for the woodchucks and a shelter for the birds. Both catbirds and song sparrows built there, the indigo daily visited the bush, and once our black-billed cuckoo came there and gave his "rain call."

What surprised us was the interest people took in the crop. A dozen folks spoke to us about "buying" some of the berries. We didn't sell any, but we gladly gave them away. Inasmuch as people make

elderberry wine, perhaps strict obedience to the code of the extreme drys would have called upon us to smash the ensnaring fruit, but no uneasy conscience spurred us up about it. In fact, one man who we thought was going to make elderberry wine said emphatically that of all delusions elderberry wine was the greatest. And from another who took our berries we received back an elderberry pie surprisingly delicious.

On the Sundays after the berries were ripe we found people driving from near by towns to pick them. Our road, thank God, has not been cleaned up by the road commissioner. The exquisitely beautiful wild flowers and bushes have not been ruthlessly mowed off. Though we have the bumps as we drive over the road, we have the beauty too. Many of these townsfolk have filled their pails with elderberries along the roadside. Whether they made pie or wine, we never knew, but they had the fun of getting them. A wild road, overgrown with bushes, even intruding here and there on the track, touches something deep and elemental, and gives a tired town or city dweller a new lease on life.

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One of the birds that we always have enjoyed around the back of the house at the farm has been the phoebe. We never found the nest, but we felt sure that it was near or in the old wagon-house. The birds sat on the peak of the building, on the covered track of the sliding door, or on the trees and bushes near. Sometimes one would come and perch on the pipe of the artesian well. We liked to see them catch the flies, and as we raise large crops of flies, and sometimes get tired of swatting, we liked to have flies caught. We admired the phoebe's soft gray plumage, the bright eye that seemed to see everything, the quick dart for an insect and instant return to her

perch. The call of the bird, the jerky, emphatic Phoebe, always notified us when they were near. In breeding season, after getting a mouthful of insects, the two birds always darted away along the lower side of the wagon-house. The nest was near, we knew, for they reappeared almost immediately. We do not band birds, but from the little intangible things that make one sure, and also from the habit of the species, we knew that the same pair came back year after year.

This year we missed our phoebes. The other flycatchers were on duty, more kingbirds than we ever had seen before, wood peewees out in front, generally on the telephone wire, and the great crested flycatchers back in their favorite thickets along Pasture Brook. When we first went up we thought we heard a chebec. But we wondered about the phoebe and felt sorry that they had not come.

Slowly we have come to learn about the darker side of bird life. There is more to it than darting about in the sunshine, singing, mating, feasting, and spending the winter in the South. Bird enemies are everywhere. Even where man has grown civilized enough to protect the song birds, the spotted adder and black snake, the crow and red squirrel and other enemies, rob their nests, high winds dash the young birds to the ground, they are crowded out of the nest too soon and fall, and prowling cats account for millions. The adult birds are picked up on the windshields of fast motor cars, or in migration they hurl themselves to death against the great flashing lights of our cities. We often spoke of these things, and the Madame one day read an article telling about the kinds of birds most often killed by motors.

"But sometimes they grow old," I said to her. "That too must account for some." "Yes," she said, "but we never know that. That is part of the story

we never find out about. The animal or bird, old or sick or wounded, goes off by itself to die."

The next day we stumbled upon a pathetic record which explained the break-up of our phoebe home. The work on the wagon-house brought it to light.

Poking around in the basement of the building examining the big timbers to see how much they had pulled apart, I came upon a birds' nest built against the side of one of the large hand-hewed beams. It was a fairly good-sized nest, made of moss and dried grass, and it was plastered against the side of the beam with clay or some other sticky substance. I pulled myself up and threw the beam of my electric torch on the inside of the nest. There sat the mother bird as she had been sitting many a long month. No eggs were under her, no little nestlings that she was brooding. Nor was there any swift rush of wings when I appeared. A weird, rather gruesome sight met my eyes. What I saw was only the skeleton of a bird. All was in position—the skull and beak held steadily just as if the bird were alive and brooding, the legs drawn up naturally, the wings with a remnant of the larger feathers spread over the nest. The nest itself was in perfect condition.* The mother bird sat where she had died at her post—fulfilling her destiny.

Could anything living count for much less than this dead bird under the floor of the wagon-house in a

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*This nest was accepted by the U. S. National Museum, Washington, D. C. (Smithsonian Institution), and added to the collection. Dr. Wetmore, Assistant Secretary, commenting on this nest, said to the author: "As our small birds almost always meet a tragic death, it is unusual to find such remains. Ordinarily when a bird is sick it loses its vigilance and is promptly caught and eaten by some predator. That this is true is easily evident on a little reflection as to the tremendous numbers of small birds about us, and the comparatively few occasions on which we find their dead bodies."

LOOKING BACK AS WE START UP THE HILL

remote country hamlet? And yet the little bird does count. Remember the two sparrows sold for a farthing.

. . . . . .

When the hours of day are numbered,
And the voices of the night
Wake the better soul that slumbered
To a holy calm delight,
Ere the evening lamps are lighted—

Those lines flashed through my mind night after night when we made the same little pilgrimage.

We walked up the rough, steep road that passes our house on the way toward Summit, to the easier grade at the top of the first rise, and sometimes over this slope and up the next steep pitch. Always on this road we were getting higher and higher, always reaching a point where we could look back farther and farther. On our right the fields and woods went up steadily to the Richmondville-Summit-Stamford road half a mile or more away. On our left the fields dropped away to Stony Creek and the end of our hollow against the slopes of Cobble and Pine Mountains. On this road in the twilight, these mountains loom bulkier, craggier, higher, than they really are, the glen between looks deeper and lonelier. Early in the season we liked to stop at the top of the first rise and listen to the bell-like note of the wood thrush coming across the valley, or the harp-like music of the veery coming down from our upper woods. In August the music of the thrushes and most of the other bird music was over. But when all other songs were stilled, along this road in the evening almost always the catbird sang for us under his breath so sweetly that we called him our nightingale. And hardly ever did we reach the place where the electric light wires leave our road and start cross lots up the mountain without finding one of our indigo buntings

sitting up in the last light of day, and singing away as if no thought of fall had ever entered his little head.

A full half mile from our house as measured by a motor car stands a little deserted red house on what was once known as the Olendorf farm. Formerly the house had eighty or ninety acres of farmland attached to it. In the course of time this land was sold for pasturage, until nothing was left but an orchard and garden, very steep, with barn and red house clinging to the edge of the road where it climbs around outcropping rocks which are almost high enough to be called cliffs, but cliffs nearly hidden by trees and bushes. We call this old place "Joseph's View," for one of our small nephews admired it exceedingly and always asked us to walk there when he came to see us. Also he remarked to his mother that "with two bath-rooms, it would be a very comfortable place to live." Joseph's View was the limit of our evening walk. When we went there we were impressed with the fact that the place afforded the finest view down our hollow and to the big valley beyond that we got anywhere.

Joseph's View was sold for a few hundred dollars to a poor man who tried to eke out a living as agent for a nursery. He had to set out many trees that customers never took. Eventually he lost out, and the town took the place over for taxes. The town then tried to sell it, but without success. So there it stands empty—a house built up not with lath and plaster, but with solid wooden planks. Before the front door, somebody with a love of beauty once put a trellis over which ran a clematis which came into feathery white bloom in August. And in the yard —the place stood almost on the road—were crowded golden glow, pink phlox and bleeding heart. All these were blooming in prolific but confused masses which almost choked the entrance to the place.

Along this road, but especially near Joseph's View, the Madame found inexhaustible supplies of the wild flowers that we love, though some call them weeds. With these she has made our rooms beautiful all summer—Queen Anne's lace, evening primrose, daisies, buttercups, vetch, blue vervain, white and red clover, jewelweed, live-for-ever, everlasting, yarrow, white and purple asters, musk mallow, Joe-Pye-weed, and toward the end of our stay many kinds of goldenrod. In the meadows near by she found again the ladies' tresses, one of the orchids. Just off the road below the house there were boneset and snakeberry.

We could get some of the coarser ferns and brakes along the road, but for the more graceful feathery ferns we went to the woods.

It is hard to put into words how much this lonely road has meant to us, and how much we have enjoyed our little walks to Joseph's View.

How many of God's best gifts are free as the air, the sunshine, and the blessed evening shadows!

. . . . . .

Even in our hollow, far away from the noise and confusion of the cities, we need an integrating principle for our lives. What can take these strange, baffling, contradictory phenomena—these life problems of the phoebe dead on her nest and the neighbor who lost his little place, these thoughts of the shortness of life and the struggle of the mass of men—and bring some sort of order from them? Only one thing can do it. It is faith in a supreme intelligence and love that rules and overrules, but which depends on us to carry out its will. With such a brain and heart back of the universe, even a phoebe counts.

How such a Supreme Love ever could have its origin of course is beyond us. How to reconcile what we call perfect love with the hell we sometimes find, even in our retreat, we can not tell. All we can say

is that we believe that back of this universe stands the reconciling One. And we have faith that in His Light we shall see light. One thing we know absolutely. We all are here and we all are in the same boat. Some things our strongest doubters can not disprove. And faith in this life is a great starting point for faith in what is to come.

Various Times, Summer of 1930.

CHAPTER XIII

THE CEMETERY BEE

AT the farm we live near a little graveyard. The graveyard is not much in evidence, as it is hidden by our big barns, and it lies across a little brook along which the bushes have grown up thick. Often we have walked there toward the close of day and felt the peace and solemnity of the place.

It commands an extensive view down the valley and along the ridges. On the up-hill side it is bounded by our old orchard, on the down-hill side by the thickets along Stony Creek where the veeries sing in June.

For a long time we have been anxious about the neglect of the cemetery. The fence had fallen down, leaving it open on three sides to our lands. Some of the stones had tipped over and some stood at an angle which made it certain that they too would fall before many years. It was overgrown with weeds and bushes. Other people were anxious about it also, and repeatedly said that something ought to be done. This year something has been done—easily and quickly—and here is the story.

One of our neighbors up the hill, seventy-four years old, came to see about getting a little sand and cement with which to fix the stone on his father's and mother's plot. He again spoke of doing something to the graveyard, and said we ought to have an iron fence with iron posts. Other neighbors were haying near by. We consulted them about what kind of fence it ought to be. We all agreed on an extra strong woven wire fence with iron posts, took the measurements, and then I sent the order and the check, trusting to time to get my money back.

With the help of these neighbors we made a list of people near and far who had relatives buried in the cemetery. We sent each one a letter stating that we were going to have a fence any way, and telling the amount we needed. We also said that any balance left over would be devoted to painting the church, and we announced that, when the fence came, we would have a field day or bee to put it up, and otherwise put the cemetery in order. The response of the people was instantaneous. From distant cities came letters with contributions. We had touched chords in many a heart. With some the interest was in parents. With others it was respect for grandparents or for more distant relatives. With a few the feeling was for husband, wife, son or daughter. One said she could hardly bear to think of her mother lying in that field under weeds and bushes.

About a week before the fence was put up three of the men living near by did hard work for almost two days, setting the corner posts in concrete and adapting the complicated iron braces to our side-hill graveyard. This work had to be done in advance, so that the mortar might set and the posts stand the strain of some hard pulling.

The day appointed for the neighborhood meet, or bee, or field day, early in September, was one of great beauty. Warm in the sun, cool in the breeze, it was ideal for the picnic part of the occasion. Soon after 8 a. m. men began coming with scythes, bush-hooks, long crowbars, hoes, and other tools. Most of them arrived by motor and drove into our door-yard. They organized themselves in the free and easy way of the country, none being willing to act as foreman, but the natural leaders taking the lead, and all expressing their opinions freely.

Inasmuch as I had suggested appointing a foreman, and had expressed fear that the work would be

haphazard without one, I was especially interested to see the simple, natural, neighborly working together without any special boss, and the results it secured. Some began mowing with scythes, some attacked bushes, one kindled a large fire in a corner away from the graves. Everything put on the fire burned up clean, whether it was green or brown. Some of the women raked. Two men at my suggestion went for my cross-cut saw, and felled two old apple trees which stood almost on the line between the orchard and cemetery, one dead, the other half dead. Many gave special attention to their own plots. Little bunches of gladioli and other flowers began to appear on the graves that had been hidden away in the grass. The fencing was an interesting operation. Led by a giant who stands six feet three in his stockings, the men drove the iron posts down in the hard ground. Then they began to stretch the close woven, rather stiff wire fence. The big man had brought a system of blocks and pulleys, and his neighbor two boards the height of the fence that could be bolted over it so as to enable the men to pull evenly on it. When the fence was stretched tight enough between posts, the wires were forced into the little iron fasteners which were a part of the post, and hammered tight. It was not easy work. Nor was it free from complications. Such fencing is made for level ground. When erected on a hill, it has to be made to fit. Fitting such material is not quite like fitting wood or cloth.

When the cemetery was cleaned up, another gang of half a dozen men started work on the stones and markers. This, too, had its dangers and difficulties. They might easily have turned over the taller and heavier stones. They might have brought loosened top pieces down on their own heads. They might have split and broken the stones. None of these

things happened. They tackled the hardest jobs and finished them. There was one stone that an expert had come up to see a few years ago, and he had expressed grave doubt of the possibility of doing anything with it without a complicated apparatus. This stone was lifted, too, and made secure. By the aid of a long wooden prop, crowbars and flat stones, new foundations were put under it.

The use of the crowbar in the hands of a man accustomed to it is an interesting sight. This, as probably my readers know, is one of the oldest tools known to man—a simple bar, now made of iron. In physics the professor tells the pupils that it is a lever of the first class, that a wheelbarrow is one of the second class, and a sugar-tongs of the third class. Lifting a heavy stone with a bar, one may hear a man call, "Hand me a bait." His neighbor then quickly passes him a flat stone to put under the bar. What the men call "bait," the professor calls fulcrum. A boy who idly takes a fork, puts it under a saltcellar, and pulls down against one of his fingers to lift the saltcellar and maybe tip it over, is using a lever of the first class, viz.: power at one end, weight at the other end, fulcrum between power and weight. But let no one think that a crowbar is used only to pry and lift. These men dug holes with crowbars. They used them as posts to which to fasten guy ropes. A man leaning against a bar stuck in the ground at the proper angle is a formidable thing to move. They picked up the bars and used them as sledges or hammers when those tools were in another spot. If the pliers were not handy, the ever-ready bar twisted the stiff wire around where it could be fastened. If the wire-cutter balked at an unusually heavy wire, the sharp edge of the bar went up under the wire and a blow or two of the hammer cut it clean as a whistle. The crowbar which can move tremendous weights can

also perform the most delicate tasks. But it must be in the right hands. Not in my hands can the crowbar render these various services to man. The man who would use a bar must be acquainted with the bar. He must be its master. And he must be strong.

At twelve o'clock nearly all present, thirty-one in number, made their way through the orchard and around the barns to our door-yard. On chairs, on the ground, on blankets spread along the edge of our side terrace, we had lunch together. The coffee-pot that so often has made coffee for the ministers on Monday noons in Boston, now made coffee for a different lot of people, but they were people doing just as religious work. We furnished coffee, doughnuts and bananas, and the workers brought the rest of the lunch. We shared with each other. Two of the "kin and connection" had motored up from Cobleskill to help serve, but our Pennsylvania-California guests had sped on toward Massachusetts at eleven o'clock. There was enough and to spare. Then I made a little speech to the company, giving a report of receipts and expenditures, and urging the repair and painting of the little Lutheran church in the Hollow. It was a happy gathering of friends and neighbors. All came in to go over the house and see the improvements, and to have a little visit, and then we went back to work.

The sun was hot in the afternoon, the work was heavier, but they stuck to it. About four the Henness cows in the adjoining pasture were seen coming over the brow of the hill headed toward the bars. Whether they were thinking of the millet that Henness was cutting for their evening meal, or desired to come without giving Tony the collie any trouble, I do not know, but I incline to the former hypothesis. One after another the men with cows to milk gathered up their tools, but the fence gang and the monument gang pushed

through to a completion of the task. Said the oldest worker, with seventy-four years to his credit, "The cemetery never looked as good in my time." Several times in the afternoon I read the inscription on stones that were being lifted out of the earth and cemented again to their bases. Frequently they bore the names of people who had no connection with those present. Perhaps the oldest present might recall where they had lived. While family feeling inspired some of the labor, much of it was purely unselfish—done for the good of the community and out of respect for the dead.

It gave me a good feeling to think about it. Here was one man just back from a trip to the Pacific Coast. Here were others who had taken a day off from business in the larger towns. Here was the hired man of one of our neighbors, who was sick in bed. Here was a tall, strong, handy fellow who had nobody buried in the cemetery, but who stayed to the last. It was being good citizens. It was being good neighbors.

Then from the older ones I got isolated facts to put with others picked up here and there, until the story of the cemetery could be read like a book.

The land for cemetery, church and school came off of our farm. It was given by men named Hodgson, "Uncle Billy" and his brother Samuel. Their father was an English immigrant born in 1777, who came to the Hollow as a young man and bought all this land at the upper end. He built himself a log cabin which tradition says stood across the road from our house. He also built the old house which preceded the one in which we live. He had a large family, and was poor and struggling until he received an inheritance from England. Then he became well off. He must have been a generous old fellow, for he took pride in giving a farm to each of his eight sons and

daughters. He was not above a little harmless display of his new wealth, for the story is that when he went to Charlotteville with the grist, instead of having the miller "toll it" as usual—that is take pay for grinding out of the flour—he offered the miller a twenty dollar gold piece and told him to take his pay out of it, which the miller of course could not do.

There probably was no graveyard until the old man's wife, Lavina Hodgson, died in 1848. Then they selected a lovely knoll and buried her on it. There the old man himself was buried five years later. The Lutheran church was organized in 1865. Probably about this time Uncle Billy and his brother gave the land for the cemetery. Strange bits of history came to the surface during the afternoon, illustrating how odd some of the things are that are remembered. The men were lifting the stone of Mary Hodgson to make it more secure. One of the veterans present looked at it a moment and said: "The grave of 'Blind Polly.' She would send one of the family upstairs for a gingham apron and they never could fool her. She could tell by feeling of it if it was her apron or not." On the stone is this verse:

> Yes, gone to the grave is she whom we loved,
> And lifeless that form that so gracefully moved.
> The clods of the valley encompass her head,
> The marble reminds us a sister is dead.

That kind of verse, rather stiff and formal, was popular in those old days. There is a little more warmth and color in the lines on Uncle Billy's stone. Hackneyed though the sentiments may be, they probably are a true testimony to the place that this kind old bachelor filled in the community:

> A light is from our circle gone,
> A voice we loved is stilled,
> A place is vacant in our home
> Which never can be filled.

That probably is a true tribute. Nobody ever could take Uncle Billy's place in the family circle. Things began to go down after his day. We are especially interested in him because he put up the big barns and built our house. All the traditions seem to agree that our buildings went up between seventy and eighty years ago. Mr. Fuller of Cobleskill, eighty-four years old, just remembers their being built. Mr. Odell of Summit, also past eighty, painted them over sixty years ago, and at that time they had been standing for some years.

There were less happy chapters of family history that were reopened during this long afternoon. Here was a promising man who was drowned at the age of twenty-three. Here was a hard drinker, here the hero or villain of an elopement. Sometimes the story told itself—as where the stone recorded the death of the mother at the age of twenty-five and the birth of her little Willie the same day. And we must add that the baby lived only six weeks.

There is a great deal of history even in a graveyard with perhaps only eighty or ninety inscriptions. Some of the history seems trivial, but it is out of these trivial happenings that the great movements of history emerge. It is the coming and going, the marrying and burying, the work and the play, of the plain people that create and sustain this world.

Many a little country graveyard with records of value has gone down. Title to the land has seemed obscure and the farmer adjoining often has claimed it. Many of the stones have gone into foundations and the graves have been ploughed over.

New York State has done a wise thing in enacting that hereafter where title to burying places becomes obscure title shall vest in the state. The Daughters of the Revolution also have begun the work of listing every inscription in every graveyard of the state.

A little country churchyard back in 1742 inspired one of the best known poems in the English language, "Gray's Elegy." Contact with our little cemetery has made us read again this masterpiece of a man who was the most finished writer of his times, and yet whose life in many ways never fulfilled its promise. The Elegy is so full of sympathy for the plain man who never achieved fame, and it expresses so majestically the way we all feel in the presence of death, that it is quoted more often probably than any other poem in the language.

Each in his narrow cell forever laid,
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

. . . . . .

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield,
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke;
How jocund did they drive their team afield!
How bowed the woods beneath their sturdy stroke!

Nor you, ye Proud, impute to these the fault,
In Mem'ry o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise.

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire;
Hands that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or wak'd to ecstasy the living lyre.

September 10, 1930.

CHAPTER XIV

THE CHURCH IN THE HOLLOW

OUR last Sunday at the farm was almost our last day. We were near enough to the end of summer to be in that thoughtful mood which comes almost every time one says good-by to scenes he loves.

Late in the afternoon we went to church. That is, we took a walk and ended up at the "Church in the Hollow," a couple of hundred yards down the road from our house.

The church stands on the highway facing the morning sun as it comes over the ridge. It is a Colonial type meeting-house, with good simple lines, surmounted by a square open belfry over which is a gilded dome, and it is painted white with green blinds. There are sheds once called horse-sheds on one side and a little community house, or social hall, next to the sheds, both back far enough to be unobtrusive, and framed by the woods and thickets along Stony Creek.

This afternoon, like many a Sunday afternoon for the past two or three years, the church stood silent and deserted. The minister of a neighboring village preached here Sunday afternoons for years, but congregations ran down, and it became harder and harder "to support preaching." The few of the faithful left had cars and could just as well go to the neighboring village and support services there. Nobody ever decided formally to stop using the Church in the Hollow. Always there has been hope that some day the services would begin again. But the day of beginning has not come.

THE CHURCH IN THE HOLLOW

Meanwhile, standing unused, the church building, like any other deserted building, has gone down. Governments may exempt church property from the laws of taxation, but nature is more inexorable. The sun and the rain always beat upon it. The storms of winter assail it. Moth and rust go on steadily corrupting. So it has come to pass that the men of the Hollow are afraid to ring the bell in their church for fear it will come crashing down upon them. The wooden shingles have rotted and a leak has developed above a perfectly good organ. The paint has worn off and the church begins to look wood colored. And all the lovely gilt that one could see from the hilltops for miles around looks dull and rusty now.

This little church, used or not used, gives distinction to Beards Hollow. I here apply that name to a hamlet and not to the narrow hollow among the hills. There are ten houses in this hamlet, counting the three nearest on the hills around, but two of them are empty. The schoolhouse is near the church, but few notice it any more, as it is not used and it is almost hidden by the locust trees and other shrubbery around it. We can't let the little church go down. First, it is a church, second, it is near us, third, it is picturesque and beautiful, and fourth, we like it.

The Cemetery Bee gave impetus to a movement to repair and paint the church. We have had a small fund in the Hollow for that purpose for some time, amounting to nearly two hundred dollars. When we sent out appeals for the cemetery we mentioned the church also. About the middle of the afternoon at the "bee" one of the oldest citizens, too lame to work, looked at what had been done and called me aside. Said he: "The church ought to be tended to at once. I gave money for that organ and there's a bad leak right above it. There are three Georges here. If you'll get all three to give

twenty-five dollars apiece toward the church, I'll give twenty-five." Later he whispered the same story to some one else and chuckled over it. "I guess I'm safe," he said. Before we left that afternoon, the smallest George said, "Yes, of course I'll give." The next day the biggest George said, "Sure, if the others will I will." And finally the other George said, "We won't let the thing fail, we're with you." We had sixty dollars left over from the cemetery fund and turned that over to the church fund. Then we added our mite. So in a day the repair fund was more than doubled. It probably won't be very hard to get the hundred dollars needed. In fact, another George, who is a lawyer in the western part of New York State, sent his check for twenty-five dollars as soon as he heard of the incident in the cemetery. In his letter he said: "This is given on condition the church be repainted white with green blinds and that the dome be regilded."*

That Sunday afternoon we sat down on the step of the church to rest, to look off at the beautiful hills from a different angle, and to talk things over.

A large concrete slab was at our feet, making a kind of horseblock or landing platform for the buggies and wagons that for years drove up to the church. A wide crack across the middle divided the stone into two parts, but it was still solid. Where we sat was a kind of entrance recess with doors on each side leading to the galleries. The main entrance of the church was directly behind us. A Sabbath stillness lay over everything. The two or three cars that had brought relatives or friends to our neighbors' for the mid-day meal had departed. No dogs were barking. Our nearest neighbor was not calling his cows. Crows

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*The Shingling Bee started October 14, and as we go to press painting and repairs are virtually completed.

in the distance were speaking their minds, there were crickets and locusts sawing away, and a bluebird sat for a little while near us on the telephone wire, giving its gentle note. It was a good time to think things over.

Said the Madame: "I sort of feel that the old church knows that we are interested in it and is glad."

"Well, you know," I said, "that London architect that we had at the Authors' Club last winter seemed to really believe that walls keep memories tucked away and can reproduce them."

"I don't believe that," she replied, "but I do like to think sometimes that the things we love know it and appreciate it, that they are glad to see us when we come and sorry when we go away."

"I suppose it would seem foolish to some people," I continued, "to fix up this old church, unless we are going to have services. I had a talk with L— yesterday. He said he didn't see the use of making the minister come over from Richmondville and have a second service when the few people here can just as easily go to him in the morning. Nearly all have cars. He said only a handful came the last time they attempted services."

"I don't think it foolish," said the Madame. "Churches teach something without services. It gives me good thoughts when I see a little spire or church tower among the trees. The churches are one of the great charms of an English landscape, and if we only built better they might be of ours."

"The forefathers built solidly up here," I answered.

"So they did," she went on, "and this church, if we keep it up, will mean something to all the people who pass by, even if they don't realize it at the time."

"There is another side to it," I said. "It's good for our morale to keep things up. We all like to live

in a community where there is a good neighborhood spirit. It draws us together if we do things together. It makes the right kind of strangers settle in a place, and fills the empty houses."

"I don't know when I have enjoyed anything more than our bee yesterday," said the Madame. "One or two of the women felt so happy over it that they cried. There is no getting away from the fact that the way to know people is to see them at work, and the way to get close to them is to have a common job."

We fell silent for a while, and then I told the Madame about one of those fighting radicals down in the big valley, who first rallied me about "going over to the Lutherans," and then seriously took me to task for helping people in whose principles I did not believe.

"Whoever is not with me is against me," said this radical. "That always has been sound doctrine. You have principles. How can you square it with your conscience to help a church that you do not agree with?"

I replied that it was not true that I did not agree with them.

"What do you mean?" he rejoined. "Do you accept all that has come down from Augsburg or Wittenberg or Leipzig?"

"Not a bit of it," I told him. "No Lutheran does either. Here is an illustration of what I mean. I have a friend who is the editor of a Lutheran paper. When I walk with him or dine with him or travel with him, we discuss many subjects. We have the same general outlook on life. We like the same books. We worship the same God, and we have about the same conception of man's duty to his fellow men. We feel drawn together. I think of him as a friend and brother. It is something that gets past creeds. It's deeper than creeds."

"But do not creeds separate men?" he asked.

"Undoubtedly," I told him. "There are real vital differences of opinion. Nothing is gained by hiding them. But there is also a greater difference between what most men believe deep down and really act on than what is said in the creeds of the churches they attend. It is these deep down beliefs—faiths is a better word—that I care most about. With all these Christians in the Hollow I feel myself in agreement. Most of them believe that the big important thing in religion is to be good neighbors, decent citizens, God-fearing, God-loving men. Well, that is exactly what I hold. I can support that kind of church anywhere—no matter what its name or creed. These people in the Hollow have had me preach in their church. They have sent for me to conduct a funeral in it. I probably shall preach there again. If I can preach acceptably to them it is because our essential beliefs are the same. We all hold to the fundamentals of Christianity—a Great God over us all, a human life we all have to live, a common end to that life and a noble revelation of God in Christ to tell us how we ought to live and how we ought to die. If my own church considered me false to it because I believe these things, or because I see the good in other churches, I should get out. But it does not. It is the very essence of Universalism to try to find the universal things that unite us, and to make everybody recognize them and live up to them."

"It is interesting," said the Madame, "to think that two or three weeks ago you were preaching in a Methodist church, and that here to-day you are planning to paint and repair a Lutheran church. Wouldn't some of our folks think you ought to be preaching your own doctrine?"

"It is not only true as Jesus taught, that 'he that doeth the will shall know of the doctrine,' but

he that doeth the will shall reveal the doctrine." I replied.

"Very well," said the Madame, as we started home, "let the text be 'Fresh Paint.' "

October 8, 1930.

CHAPTER XV

OUR FAITHFUL CAR

FOR some years, we have not owned a car. We have borrowed a car of one of my brothers to make the necessary seven miles between Cobleskill and the farm. Back in 1913 we bought a Ford and in 1914 a second-hand Cadillac, and both stayed with us so many years that our friends began to remind us of what happened to the one-horse shay. When we parted with the Ford in the early twenties, it went to another member of the family to be turned into a truck, and when we said good-by to the Cadillac a year or two later, it went to be a towing car for a garage. We are not very hard on cars.

Through the years I have kept my driving permits in order, and have used them enough in the summers to keep my hand in. All the joy of driving lies in that absolute command of the situation that makes it much like walking.

This year we bought a little car of a popular model. Far be it from me to do inartistic free advertising. All I will say is that the car is made by a man not exactly poor, in a mid-west city which has had a rapid growth in population, is named after the man, and is a successor to a brave little car which was irreverently called a flivver.

Oh, but it was a beautiful little car—a town sedan. It stood waiting for us at the railway station, all equipped with new shiny license plates, ready to go. I knew the levers and I knew the switches, so all we had to do was to start.

"There are some people," said a relative, "who would not ride in such a car. A corporation which is

calling in large heavy cars and giving its men cars of this grade has stirred up a hornets' nest. The men say it doesn't look well to drive up to a business place in one of these and have a competitor arrive in a car that cost six times as much. And as for the ladies headed for a bridge club, they naturally feel a deep sense of outrage."

This chapter is no argument against big cars, or good clothes, or beautiful houses. It is merely a gentle insistence that in little cars one can have good times, and it is a recognition of the fact that plain cars, like every-day people, do a large part of the work of the world.

As for "front," let those put it on who feel the necessity. Perhaps a young doctor who has just moved into a fashionable neighborhood may find it desirable to drive a fairly expensive car. Most of us would be happier, however, if we freed ourselves from every lurking tendency to "keep up with the Joneses."

All summer we have been happy with the little car. I have to confess that we have driven the car only 2,000 miles, which is merely enough to limber it up, but how bravely and faithfully it has served us. Up and down our valley, into the big valley, to market, to church, to the railroad station, to call, it has done our work without a hitch. And if one is obsessed with the necessity of driving two hundred miles every time he goes out, I commend to him a seven mile drive down the valley in the early morning when the mist is just rising from the hills, or a seven mile drive back in the late afternoon when the shadows have lengthened, or at night when the sun has just set. And if one feels hurried much of the year, I commend driving when there is time enough and to spare, so that if one wants to take the road high up on the ridge and make twenty miles instead of seven he can feel free to do it.

We have tried all the roads, up and down. We have gone off into the hills and down into the hollows. The Madame, who had become somewhat nervous on the hard concrete roads with traffic whizzing by, did not seem to mind the lonely roads, even if they were more perpendicular than horizontal. From Beards Hollow we went to Dibble Hollow, Brooker Hollow, Wharton Hollow, and Sapbush Hollow, or West Fulton. We drove over Yankee Street, up Lookingglass Hill, and through Huckleberry Kingdom. Always there were more hollows and more hills just beyond to explore some other year. It was astonishing how good the roads were along the hill tops. Of course the dry summer explained part of it, but the average of country roads is rising steadily. The worst road we ever struck, and this one we daily struck, was the last quarter of a mile of our own road from Cobleskill, after we left the town of Richmondville and entered the town of Summit. We never complained to the road commissioner, because it would not have done the slightest good. He has a township full of mountain roads to deal with.

There is a new state road that we enjoyed driving over, only one and one-half miles from the farm, connecting Richmondville and Stamford, both of which are on other trunk lines of road. This road crosses the ridges on a fairly easy grade and commands magnificent views of the Catskills. At Jefferson, eight miles from the farm, a new country road was finished the past summer, which carries one over to North Blenheim, in the Schoharie Valley. As beautiful a drive as I know, anywhere, is through Summit to Jefferson, and then to the Schoharie Valley this way. At Blenheim one can go south to Gilboa, Grand Gorge and the main road through the Catskills, and north through Breakabeen, Middleburg and Schoharie, where one strikes the Albany-Binghamton

road, coming out over the Helderbergs. To most of my readers, these names are but names. Let a person pass but once, however, up or down the Schoharie Valley, and these names will stand for something all of his days.

The Schoharie, diminished in flow by the diversion of its waters at Gilboa for the use of New York City, still is quite a stream. Even on this second summer of drought, its deep pools gave shelter to the gamey, small-mouthed black bass and the rainbow trout. The great diversion of all the small fry in the family the past summer has been a swimming party to a favorite hole in the Schoharie, between Esperance and Central Bridge. Fifty years ago it was a hot, dusty walk to our swimming hole in the Cobleskill Creek. Now our Cobleskill youth go in style in big motor cars to the Schoharie River. No flow of water, however, accounts for the charm of the Schoharie Valley. There are lovely curves of the stream shaded by great elms or beautiful maples, it flows through some of the richest alluvial flats in the state, all under a high degree of cultivation, and the hills that border the valley are bold and commanding. We never whisper even to ourselves what here I brazenly set down, that we have few farms up the Cobleskill to equal those along the Schoharie. Of course, in our valley we have the metropolis of the county, and the only agricultural fair that has survived the ravages of time, the wiliest politicians, and the best ball players, and a lot of other things on which we plume ourselves, but for wonderful farm lands in a noble setting the Schoharie Valley has us all beaten.

When we were children, the feeling between Schoharie and Cobleskill was deep and even bitter. We talked of moving the court house from Schoharie to Cobleskill. We thought it ethically proper to hire professionals to pose as stone cutters and join our

amateur ball team, so as to give Schoharie the larruping of its life. But now a change has come, not due entirely to age and better morals. We get so easily into the Schoharie Valley from our valley that we have come to feel that it is all one valley. At least it all is ours. What we once did with horse and buggy in two hours, we now do with the little car in twenty minutes.

Traveling up and down the Schoharie Valley, north or south, we pass frequently the mouths of narrow side valleys which it is a delight to explore. Down some of them run cold trout streams. Following the course of these streams one may be out of sight or sound of human habitations for miles. Along one of them, back of Breakabeen, my brother this year scared up two deer.

In the valley, on an island in the Schoharie, lived the only governor our county has given to the state—Wm. C. Bouck, who was governor back in the early forties. Always we have looked over at the island, but only lately, through the construction of a bridge, have we been able to drive our motor cars to it.

Driving down the Schoharie one beautiful afternoon we came upon an old family graveyard, and in it we found a new stone with an inscription which hinted at the stirring days in this valley one hundred and fifty years ago. It read:

> Capt. Jacob Hager, Schoharie County Militia, October 20, 1775. Served in the Schoharie and Mohawk Valleys throughout the Revolution. Commanded an Expedition against Brant. Defended the upper fort against Sir John Johnson, in 1780. Died May 21, 1819, aged 85 years. Erected by his descendants and the State of New York, 1928.

There are interesting cities to visit near the little hill farm—Kingston, the old capital of the state, ninety miles to the south; Albany, fifty miles to the

east, with its wonderful state library and capitol building, its views of the Hudson, and its memories of over three hundred years; Schenectady—where Owen Young and his colleagues have built a new electric city in place of the old sleepy college town of my boyhood—forty miles away; and the cities and villages of the Mohawk, the nearest point of which is only twenty-five miles away and connected with us by perfect roads.

This summer we have made many such little trips in our car. They could hardly be regarded as "trips" by those who start in Boston in the morning and land in Canton, or Ogdensburg, New York, at night. We do not use the car in place of a train, but in place of a horse and buggy. We have not the slightest criticism to pass on those who enjoy traveling at railway speed and, on the other hand, not the slightest apology to make for trips of ten and twenty miles at twenty miles an hour. To be sure, on occasion we travel at thirty-five and do a hundred and fifty miles a day, but this is exceptional. The greater part of our motoring is "to market, to market, to buy us some bread; home again, home again, old Trot is" —well, not "dead," but put away in the garage.

We speed up when traffic is in one lane so as to play the game with the folks behind, but usually we go as we please, and the motor world goes by us at fifty or sixty miles an hour.

The automobile adds greatly to the pleasure of country life. It takes a man into seclusion, and it takes him out of seclusion just as well. It adds enormously to his resources. For example, our car gave us the use of the railway and express office at Cobleskill, seven miles away, and Richmondville, four miles away. It made good markets available. It enabled us to get to people whom we wanted to see and let them get to us.

Driving as we drove, it was not hard to stop to pick a wild flower or to enjoy a new view. Sometimes it was a little hard to turn out for the other fellow, but generally there was a place if one or the other backed up. Sometimes it was hard to find a place to park when we wanted to walk, not because there were any parking rules, but because nobody could get by if we stopped. But we learned the word so often on the lips of country people—"manage." We managed it.

One becomes very much attached to a little car used as we used our car. It became associated in our minds with many happy outings, and much real burden bearing. On our way back to Boston, as we saw it being driven away from the station in Troy, strange hands at the wheel, we felt almost as if we were deserting a pet animal. We did not bring the car back with us because we felt sure that the great city has too many cars now. Besides, it cost nothing to leave it in the country. Besides, what editor has time to drive cars in town?

October 1, 1930.

CHAPTER XVI

THE OLD HOME OF OWEN D. YOUNG

ABOUT twelve miles south of the Mohawk River, in the gorge of the Otsquago Creek, between Fort Plain and Cooperstown, lies the little hamlet of Van Hornesville. This village may have many claims to distinction, but it is set in the forefront of this chapter because it is the birthplace of Owen D. Young.

Fresh from the dedication of a church tower in Washington, D. C., in his honor, quite by chance I visited his old home town and had an hour with him there. It is that visit that I propose to describe.

The election was responsible for it. I was enabled to make the visit because I had gone home to vote, and he was in Van Hornesville to receive me because he had gone home to vote.

I had known Mr. Young slightly from personal contact and intimately through mutual friends and from his record, but I did not know him well enough to intrude upon him in his hours of relaxation at the old home. It is one thing to take a business matter to a distinguished man when he is at his office surrounded by the safeguards and barriers which every busy man perforce must erect. It is quite another to plump oneself at him in the village street where he is "Owen" to nearly everybody and everybody is Tom or Jim or Ben to him. I did not intend to do it, but it happened, and, he being what he is, it happened for the best.

Van Hornesville is only thirty-eight miles from Cobleskill by way of Canajoharie and Fort Plain, and only thirty-two miles by way of Cherry Valley

THE NEW SCHOOL AND THE LIBRARY
A tribute to the mother of Owen D. Young

and Springfield Center, but in the days when Owen Young was going to school at East Springfield and I at Cobleskill, the two places might have been two hundred miles apart so far as any connection between them was concerned. It is the automobile and the macadam road that have made them parts of the same district to-day.

My brother, who had to go out to see his lime agents the day before election, invited me to make a hundred and twenty-five mile circuit with him, and to drive the car to keep my hand in. I paid little attention until he mentioned Van Hornesville on the route. Then I said, "All right, I'll be glad to go." I thought to myself, "Here is a chance to see that new schoolhouse which Owen Young built."

The drive from our valley over to the Mohawk Valley always is full of interest. It takes one through Sharon, where my great, great grandfather settled when he came up from New Jersey after the American Revolution, and by the little red schoolhouse where my father got a better foundation in the fundamental English branches than any of his six children did in their more ambitious schools.

If, because of lime agents, one takes the old, bad, slippery road through Argusville and Flat Creek, an editor acting as chauffeur is enabled to discover how near he can come to ditching the car and yet escape. It was good to get back at last to the hard road and slide easily down to the river level. It was good to see "the Valley" again, where the Mohawk Indians built their "castles," where Dutch and English and Germans made their settlements, where Sir William Johnson once ruled like a feudal baron, and where men of Albany and the Mohawk and Schoharie settlements marched and fought in the battles of the Revolution.

It was a misty morning, but the sun was break-

ing through when we reached Canajoharie. Our business took us up to Indian Castle, one of the historic homes of the Mohawks, where there is a magnificent view up and down the valley. We were in sight of Little Falls, seven or eight miles away, where two men in whom we were interested were battling that day for the office of county judge of Herkimer County. Coming back to Fort Plain, we stopped to read the signs which told of the "first church" and the "first schoolhouse" on Sand Hill, of Tenotoge, "the largest Mohawk Indian town," of the stockade named Fort Plain, the northern limit of the raid by Brant's Indians and Tories, August 2, 1780, when "18 were killed, 80 captured and 100 buildings were burned."

At the village of Fort Plain we turned to the southwest up the valley of the Otsquago Creek, a tributary of the Mohawk. Three counties of New York State meet near here, all bearing interesting names—Montgomery, Herkimer and Otsego—the first two the names of heroes of the Revolution, the last an Indian name. Our route was out of Montgomery County, through a corner of Herkimer into Otsego and then back to old Schoharie. I had never seen the Otsquago, a rushing stream after the heavy rain of the day before. The road, a beautiful piece of modern engineering, followed up into the hills the grade made for it by the water. It was a lovely, curving road, now in a ravine, now out of it. It ran past farmhouses, through woods, along rolling pastures and harvest fields. The frost was on the pumpkin and the corn was in the shock. The farmers were busy with the apples. A cider mill was hard at work. Less beautiful than yellow corn and red apples, but as important, was the manure jolting out of muddy barnyards into the fields.

Past the turn to Minden, through Hallsville and

Starkville, we rolled steadily along, farm dogs saluting us, passersby giving us "Good day," the sun full on us and on the last of the autumn leaves. A level bank or grading followed us up more or less parallel to the road, but leaving the water gradually and climbing along the side of the hills. My brother explained that it was the right of way of a railroad from Fort Plain to Richfield Springs, so nearly completed that bridges had been built, and that then it had been blocked by law-suits until men no longer wanted a railroad there.

We were driving along the road that Owen Young takes most frequently to and from the station on the New York Central Railway. It is only twelve miles from Fort Plain to Van Hornesville, and before we realized it we were there. The moment I saw the new school building on the left-hand side between the road and the creek, I knew that it was Van Hornesville. No other hamlet of two hundred people that I know of has such a schoolhouse. On the right, directly across from the school, another large stone building was going up. Under a shed adjoining, six or eight stone cutters were chipping away for dear life. Workmen were coming out of the building, and in the yard two men—one very tall, in rubber boots—were looking over plans. I asked my brother to find out where Mrs. Young lived. He joined the two men and then I saw the tall figure in rubber boots start toward the car. It was Mr. Young himself.

With that simple, natural dignity which is so much a part of him, and that fine friendliness which makes men love him, he put himself at our service and put us at our ease. With him, we went through the school and the library, inspected the new building, saw the swimming pool, the playground and village park, walked up the length of the village street, called on Mrs. Young, his mother, and Mr. Brandow,

her brother, looked at the little old Universalist church, and then climbed the hill to a lovely place that is a burying-ground, and more. We had a little more than an hour with Mr. Young, both a pleasant hour and an illuminating hour.

To understand what we saw, our readers must remember that all over the country there are many little hamlets like Van Hornesville that have gone to seed. They are off the main line of travel, there is nothing to attract new residents, the farms back in the hills which used to contribute to their life are abandoned, and too many of the brightest boys and girls of the neighborhood have grown up and moved away. With the coming of scientific agriculture, the automobile, the good road, the telephone, the radio, a country life movement has gotten under way—a movement back to the country and a movement to enrich the life of the country. There are any number of places that it has not yet reached. There are few that it has reached in just the way it has come to Van Hornesville.

At Van Hornesville, the new interest in the village has not come from a state or nation-wide movement, or the patronage of tourists, or the largess of summer boarders, it has come from the gratitude of a native son. There is no trait in Owen D. Young stronger than appreciation for what has been done for him. It goes out first of all to the old home and his father and mother, and spreads from there to the fields that he helped till and that helped till him, the schools that he attended, the little Universalist church in which he got vision and faith, and then to everybody along the way who has given him a hand up. And what he has done for Van Hornesville has been done by a citizen of Van Hornesville, and not by "a former resident from the great city of New York." He has never let go his home interest in Van Hornesville.

He may have hung up his law shingle in Boston, or taken on task after task of big business in New York, or been compelled to work for months at world problems in London or Paris or The Hague, but always he has kept thinking of the old place up in the hills as his home. It is part of his life creed that a man ought to have his roots down somewhere, and not be dominated by the transient feeling so inseparable from life in a great city. He has succeeded in communicating his feeling for the country and that part of the country he loves best to his children. "They think of it as home as much as I do," he said, "and always are glad to come back here." Walking up the street, he pointed out one of the big old-fashioned houses as his son's. A well kept lawn and a noble pine set it off. And, like the other houses on that side of the street, its garden ran back to the steep-wooded bluff.

That his mother has lived and remained much the same natural figure she was fifty years ago when he first began to realize her, that she has loved Van Hornesville all these years and wanted to stay there, that she has always been able to make a home and still is, accounts for part of his feeling. A boy or girl who can keep the old home and the old folks until he or she is past fifty is not going to give them up easily.

As one from the inside, as one who belongs, as one who speaks to the neighbors as a neighbor, Owen Young has been at work for years, improving and beautifying Van Hornesville. It would be strange if the barrier of his great distinction did not at times throw a shadow over the old familiar intercourses, but the genuineness of the man drives it away. As he walked along, the men we met were Jim and Tom and Ed to him, and he was Owen to them. There are those who say Mr. Young, but they are in Van Hornesville on business.

A few months ago, the newspapers carried long accounts of the dedication of the new schoolhouse which Mr. Young built for the village. Not everybody realizes that it is more than a building. It is the embodiment of an idea. These rural schools have run down. Neither in physical equipment, in teaching staff nor in pupils do they compare with the country schools of fifty or seventy-five years ago. Yet there are advantages in small schools near home over consolidated schools, provided the small schools can be run right. A listless girl of sixteen or eighteen, keeping seventeen or eighteen boys and girls confined at dull tasks for five or six hours, is not doing the work of education.

Here at Van Hornesville there are fifty-five boys and girls doing work from first grade up through the second year of high school. Next year there will be given a full high school course. There are five teachers, picked because they are equipped, because they have caught the idea, and because they have personality. The building itself is designed to be a teacher. It is made of stone, but, as the gray limestone quarried near by would be of a uniform color and cold in appearance, Mr. Young had it built of the stone gathered in fields and from stone walls. Shaped and dressed by the stone cutters, these came out so that the gray of the building is relieved by shades of pink and green. In the class rooms the light comes from the side, the desks are modern, and there are plants and ferns, not crowded in but placed skilfully here and there to bring in the out-of-doors. Many of the windows look out on the playground, the park, or the surrounding hills. We stopped to listen to a class in music. We saw another class hugely enjoying the lunches put up at home.

The main group of class rooms can be thrown together. Adjoining them there is a room for projecto-

scopes, and arrangements are being made to give talking movies. I discovered that the plan for the building involves not only a day school but a community center, with lectures for grown-ups. The gem of the combined building is the library, connected with the schoolhouse, but with its own entrance. Every table and chair is a reproduction of furniture of some well known period. It was made at Fort Plain, and Mr. Young seemed as proud of the "boys over there at Fort Plain" who could turn out that high-class, artistic work as he was of the work itself. The best piece for the library is to be a reproduction of the Washington settee in Independence Hall, Philadelphia, never before copied, but now copied by special permission for this school. It will stand in front of the fireplace in the library. All this equipment is part of the material of instruction. In the hall, by the library door, hangs a beautiful electric light, the globe of which shows the globe on which we live. There are a thousand and one little details not set down here, all showing that the best educators and architects have collaborated faithfully with a man who conceived the idea.

The valley is narrow and the schoolhouse is near the highway, but all the space back of it has been used. The creek has been shoved over to the foot of the steep bluff, and a pond has been filled up and made into a playground. Between the playground and the schoolhouse two swimming pools are being built—one for adults and the other for tiny tots. It is a part of education, Mr. Young believes, to learn to swim. "The water of the creek is too cold," he said. Thanks to him, the village has its own water supply, and this water can be tempered for the swimming classes.

My brother struck it about right when he remarked as we drove away, "There isn't any better schooling to be bought anywhere, no matter how

rich a man may be, than those children are getting." In education, a combination of city efficiency with country air and opportunity is hard to beat. The State Department of Education in Albany is interested in this educational experiment and is keeping in close touch with it.

Across the street from the school, another stone building is going up, the "Teachers' House." This is the building that Mr. Young was busy with when we arrived. "In a community of this size," said Mr. Young, "it is hard to find a place for teachers to live. So I am putting up this house." The architect has worked out a plan for several independent homes under one roof. The central section will be a beautiful house for the principal. In each wing there will be two complete apartments, so that each teacher may have her own menage. As for fireplaces, they brighten the scene everywhere. One hesitates to say much about the teachers' house, for fear of the pressure that will be exerted on Mr. Young for positions in the new school.

We walked up the street a little way to the large, old-fashioned house where Mrs. Young now lives—almost opposite the simple, dignified little Universalist meeting-house. Mr. Young took us back of the house, where we could get a fine view of the church. The church is no side issue with him. He spoke of it with the greatest pride—of the services held there summers, of how well the student preacher has done, of how many generations this church, over a hundred years old, has served. The telegram from Mr. Young to the Universalist General Convention in Washington, with its tribute to the Universalist faith, was a little classic in form and feeling. He said:

> I deeply regret my inability to attend the dedication exercises of the Tower of World Peace on Sunday afternoon. The dedication of Hepburn Hall at St.

WHERE FAITH IS PLANTED DEEP
Our Church in Van Hornesville

Lawrence University by Madame Curie on Saturday makes it physically impossible for me to reach Washington in time for your service. That the Universalist General Convention should dedicate the tower of its National Church to world peace is strikingly consistent with its traditional faith. No one can aspire to world peace and encourage the necessary practical steps to attain it without a deep conviction of the moral soundness of human beings everywhere. That you have associated my name with this tower makes me sensible both of the high honor and my own unworthiness.

I owe much to the Universalist Church. It was literally the church of my fathers. It was from a Universalist Sunday school that Dr. Hervey took me to St. Lawrence, and among my most intimate friends are and have been Universalist ministers. Any contribution that I may have made toward the great objective to which your tower is dedicated was made possible by the teachings of Universalism. The Universalist Church still holds my allegiance and my heart.

I did not know Mrs. Young, Owen Young's mother, very well, though I had met her at Little Falls when she attended the State Convention in 1927 to hear her son speak. But I discovered that she knew me. We had an interesting visit with her and her brother—both like her distinguished "boy" in their simple kindness and hospitality. To my chagrin, I discovered myself shouting at her, as if of necessity a person past ninety must be deaf. No one took notice of it until I checked myself. Then Mr. Young remarked, "She probably hears better than any one else in this room." Bright, keen, cheery, much of Van Hornesville centers around her in her beautiful old age. To her son, of course, she is, as she has always been, a "great mother." The new school and community center is his memorial to her. The greenhouse along the stream a little higher up came into existence when he tried to take her to Florida winters

and found that she preferred her home. The greenhouse brings a bit of Florida into a Central New York winter, and from it she is supplied with flowers and fresh lettuce when the country lies under a thick blanket of snow.

It took no words to tell that between mother and son there exists one of those fine, strong, wholesome, natural relationships, which move on a plane far above what either can give or accept—of which all the giving on both sides can be only a symbol, and which has its roots in the memories of a lifetime. And as words never express that kind of feeling, words can never describe it. It is one of the things assumed by those who know, as much as sun, stars, or the everlasting hills. "This is my mother's old home," said Mr. Young. "Her friends are here. She does not want to leave it. I want to make it as pleasant for her here as I can."

The last touch to what of necessity had to be a brief visit—brief but not hurried—was a walk up the steep hillside just back of where they all live along the village street to the hilltop where the dead have been laid to rest. This, too, is a place transformed. Gone are all the hit and miss plantings, the briers and bushes that had grown wild. There is nothing in this field of God but a lovely greensward stretching away among the stones. And the stones that had tumbled over have been set in place. At one corner of the burial place Mr. Young is massing evergreens, at another rock maples. When one walks, as we did, one comes up through a steep wood. We walked over to the vault which Mr. Young built in memory of the son who was killed in a construction camp in the far West. He had gone west with young John Atwood for the vacation experience. That story in all its tragic details, as well as the life story of this boy, so full of promise, I had heard from our mutual friends. It is not a story that one can forget. On the front

of the vault is the simple inscription, "John Young 1902-1922." We stood a moment by his grave, and then by the grave of the young wife of another son —a descendant of the Whitmans and Lees, who went away three years ago. It was a pleasant walk in a lovely place where there was a far view off to the Mohawk and to the country beyond. Here death lost something of its grimness and seemed to fit into the scheme of a Good God. "We all come up here often," said Mr. Young. "We like to walk here and talk and have some of our good times here." And what he might have been thinking was, "So that we never get in the way of leaving these others out."

Just as we were going away, I remarked, "There is something of a contrast between sitting at a council table in London or Brussels and getting on old clothes and walking over these hills." "Yes," said he, "but one thing fits into the other. A man in a conference in the city may get tense. He comes to feel he must have his own way. Things look big and important. Then he comes up here and walks out among the people, or smokes his pipe, and he relaxes. The point he insisted on may not be so vital after all. It falls into its proper place. The country is a great place in which to see things in their right perspective."

There are other plans for the future. When my brother asked him about the abandoned railway, he said he had had engineers looking it over to see if the highway might not be carried past the village on that higher level and thus make the main street safer for the children.

We did not go to the farm where he was born, a mile or two farther up, but we passed near. The watershed which separates the waters of the Susquehanna and the Mohawk is just above Van Hornesville. The source of the Otsquago is just off the road. In a few moments we were driving down a little stream

to Glimmerglass, Otsego Lake, the source of the Susquehanna. We felt that the little streams up in these hills were only the symbols of what we had seen. We had been back to the sources of the power that is needed to run the General Electric and to help make the warring nations one.

Election Time, 1929.

CHAPTER XVII

IN THE COUNTRY OF FENIMORE COOPER

AS children Cooperstown meant more to us than Cooper. In those days there were excursions to Cooperstown by the railroad, it was only fifty miles away by rail, and sometimes we children were permitted to go. People also drove to Cooperstown, thirty miles the short way through South Valley and Roseboom, thirty-six or seven around by Sharon and Cherry Valley, and fifty around by Colliers and Milford. Now in a motor age Cobleskill and Cooperstown are close together, no matter what route one follows.

When we were children we were more interested in the steam cars, in the shiny locomotive which drew the train, in the twenty-five or fifty cents we had to spend, in the main street of the town, and in the little steamboat on the lake, than in the scenery, the history or the family who gave Cooperstown its name. Now we have learned to appreciate the quiet dignity, even elegance, of this village of three thousand people, its matchless setting and its great traditions.

Cooperstown is one of the beautiful places of this world. The village itself may be equaled by innumerable other villages in New England, California or other states, but few there are so situated.

It is at the foot of Otsego Lake, not a great body of water but so formed that it would show up well if set down close to the English, Swiss or Italian lakes. The hills surrounding the lake are not high, but are well wooded, and the shore line is curving and beautified by lovely projecting points. The length of the lake is ten miles, its breadth from one to three, the

elevation is 1,200 feet above sea level, and it is one of the main sources of the Susquehanna River. The name which Cooper gave it in his novels is "Glimmerglass."

Cooper begins "The Pioneers, or the Sources of the Susquehanna," his famous story dealing with this region, in this way:

"Near the center of the State of New York, lies an extensive district or country whose surface is a succession of hills and dales, or, to speak with greater deference to geographical definitions, of mountains and valleys. It is among these hills that the Delaware takes its rise; and flowing from the limpid lakes and thousand springs of this region, the numerous sources of the Susquehanna meander through the valleys, until, uniting their streams, they form one of the proudest rivers of the United States. The mountains are generally arable to the tops, although instances are not wanting where the sides are jutted with rocks, that aid greatly in giving the country that romantic and picturesque appearance which it so eminently possesses. The vales are narrow, rich and cultivated, with a stream uniformly winding through each."

Though he wrote the novel in 1823, Cooper dealt with events that happened forty years before. "The Pioneers" is the biography, in substance at least, of his father, Judge William Cooper, who founded Cooperstown.

In an old account book of my own great grandfather, we find entries which fix the date of the removal of the family from New Jersey, Monmouth County, to New York in 1791. William Cooper moved up from Burlington, New Jersey, in 1790.

Before the American Revolution, the settlement of New York State, as Cooper puts it, "was limited to less than a tenth of its possessions." We should say "much less." The population was under 200,000

people. Cooper says: "A narrow belt of country, extending for a short distance on either side of the Hudson, with a similar occupation of fifty miles on the banks of the Mohawk, together with the islands of Nassau and Staten and a few insulated settlements on chosen land along the margins of streams composed the country." Those in the valleys of the Schoharie and Cobleskill, and in places like Cherry Valley, knew the cry of the panther and the warwhoop of the Indian. Both valleys were devastated and many were killed in the Revolution, but the brave survivors moved back when the tide of invasion ebbed.

My interest in those days is deepened by the many ancestors through the line of my mother who lived in this border country during the Revolution. My interest in "The Pioneers" is deepened by the fact that my ancestors through the line of my father went through about the same experiences as the Coopers at the same time and in the same general region.

"Beginning with a small capital and a large family," wrote Judge Cooper in 1805 to a friend, "I have settled more acres than any man in America. . . . In 1785 I visited the rough and hilly country of Otsego, where there existed not an inhabitant nor any trace of a road. I was alone, three hundred miles from home, without bread, meat, or food of any kind. My horse fed in the grass that grew by the edge of the waters. I laid me down to sleep in my watch coat, nothing but the melancholy wilderness around me."

Clymer, in his biography of Fenimore Cooper, says: "At the outlet of Otsego Lake . . . . where for a century Indian traders had been accustomed to resort and of which the name is supposed to signify such a meeting place, he (William Cooper) laid out in 1787 a village called Coopers-Town, and thither he brought his family in 1790."

This Judge William Cooper was a man of powerful build, adventurous, and famous as a wrestler. He became a man of considerable influence in New York State. When Otsego County was set off from Tryon in 1791 he was made the first judge, and he later served two terms in Congress. Unfortunately he was killed by a blow on the head given him by a political enemy as he came out of a political meeting in Albany in 1809, when he was only fifty-five years old. There are many references to him in "Reminiscences, Incidents, Anecdotes," etc., by Levi Beardsley, president of the New York Senate, an interesting old book published in New York in 1852. The Beardsley family came from Stratford-on-Avon to Stratford, Conn., and from there moved to Hoosick, N. Y. In 1790, the year that the Coopers moved to Otsego Lake, the Beardsleys moved to what is now known as Schuyler Lake, Richfield, a few miles away. Beardsley describes vividly life in a log cabin, as a child would remember it, the coarse flour, the distance from the mill, the preparation of corn at home by using a hand-made samp mortar, "a hard log with the end cut off square, set on end and hollowed out at top. as the Indians prepare theirs for the reception of corn, which is then pounded and broken by hand with a pestle." "I have had many a good supper of samp and milk made in this way," writes Beardsley. He says that they could always get fish by going to the lake, "and most generally," he adds, "brook trout for several years from the small streams where none can be found at present." Shad and herring in those days ran up the Susquehanna. "As to fresh meat, we had it," he writes, "as the Indian did his, whenever we could get it. Venison was quite common, bear meat occasionally, and perhaps veal three or four times a year." With great unction, he describes the veal pies his grandmother made three or four

times a year in the one iron pot of the settlement, which belonged to his grandfather. "Then there were the wild pigeons," killed in great numbers every spring and fall, and foxes, squirrels, martens and otter, useful for fur if not for food. "The sugar making season always was hailed with rapture by the boys."

The first school, the first church, the first funeral, the first wedding, the first newspaper, all are described graphically in this valuable old book which a brother with a taste for old books picked up for me fifteen years ago. The first newspaper, the *Otsego Herald*, was brought for them by post rider to a neighbor's a mile away through the woods, and it was the business of the boy to go bring it. Well does he remember when it was all dressed in mourning because of the death of General Washington. "The announcement of which event," he says, "threw the whole country in consternation and sorrow." The first wedding ceremony was performed by Judge Cooper, who rode eighteen miles, mainly through the woods, to get there. It was in a log cabin, the collation was "a large wooden bowl filled with fried cakes (nut cakes or doughnuts the country people call them)." "There might have been something else to constitute the marriage feast," says Mr. Beardsley, "but I do not recollect anything except a black junk-bottle filled with rum, some maple sugar and water." The judge was in his long riding boots, mud to his knees, declined any fee except to kiss the bride, ate a cake or two, "drank health, prosperity and long life to those married . . . . mounted his horse and was off."

This active, vigorous man became a kind of baron to the whole country around. He was a well beloved landlord. By 1798 he was able to build a large stone house in Cooperstown, called Otsego Hall. Remodeled later, it was the home of Fenimore Cooper

for many years. It was destroyed by fire in 1853. In Cooperstown to-day the site in the central part of the village is set apart as a public park.

Of James Fenimore Cooper in Cooperstown there are memories that are bright and gay, and some that are not so bright. The town always has been proud of his fame as an author, but for several years he was engaged in a series of law-suits that stirred up bitter feeling.

In 1837, when he returned from a long sojourn in Europe he found that the villagers regarded as their own a point of land jutting out into the lake, called "Three Mile Point." Judge Cooper had bequeathed it to all of his descendants "until 1850, and then to be inherited by the youngest thereof bearing my name." Fenimore Cooper, as the only surviving executor of his father, felt that he must enforce the title of the estate. He published a card warning the public against trespassing. The action resulted in a public meeting, a resolution to treat him with perfect contempt, an attempt to get his books removed from the Cooperstown public library, and a badly split up community. An aftermath was a series of libel suits against local newspapers and eventually against New York papers. The fight went on for years. On Cooper's part it was an honest fight to curb the unbridled press of the 1830's and 40's and to uphold the sanctity of the private life of the individual. But it cost him dear in reputation, in sale of books, in peace of mind. His title as executor to "Three Mile Point" soon was vindicated by the courts. The Point passed in 1850 to William Cooper, who leased it to the village as a place for outings. In 1899 the village bought it of Mr. Cooper, and an issue that had been pending for sixty-two years was ended.

Toward the end of June, 1930, we motored to Three Mile Point for a picnic. There were ten of us

in two cars, six adults and four children. There were also one affectionate, spunky little dog, two frying-pans, a coffee-pot, and all that ought to go with them. On a clear day with a strong south wind, we went north seven miles to the Great Western Turnpike, west twenty miles through Sharon and Cherry Valley to the head of Otsego Lake, and south seven miles along the west side of the lake to Three Mile Point. On the high part of the turnpike near Prospect and at various other points on that historic road we had far views over the Mohawk Valley and out beyond to the foothills of the Adirondacks. The haze, however, did not permit our seeing as far as Greylock in Massachusetts or the Green Mountains of Vermont, clearly visible when conditions are right.

The cars hummed along smoothly past one old battlefield after another, finally reaching the town of Springfield, N. Y. We crossed the old General Clinton road, cut in 1778 from the Mohawk Valley to bring his army to Otsego on the way to join General John Sullivan's expedition against the Indians of Pennsylvania and New York. We crossed also the road to Van Hornesville and Owen Young's old home, having hard work to get some of the party by. Then we turned down one of the most charming drives in east central New York, on a hard road, curving right and left, up and down, near the lake, with rich farms on our right, camps here and there on our left, screens of trees and bushes, bits of woodland with the water shining in the morning sun backed by the dark wooded heights of the eastern side.

It was Saturday and so there were a good number of picnic parties—one the graduating class of a neighboring high school. But we found a secluded spot under great elms by the shore, with stones laid up for a fire, and a table and benches ready to use. The site

commanded a view south over the water to Cooperstown three miles away, and eastward to some of the romantic heights immortalized in "The Pioneers." A tanager came and sang for us, high up in the dense foliage, but we saw his brave scarlet vestments. A black spaniel too meek for "Bunk" to notice, came and shared our hot bacon sandwiches. He accepted practically everything we had except banana skins and coffee. Half of the party, including all the small fry, plunged into the cold waters of Glimmerglass before luncheon, and came to the table tearing hungry. It was a true picnic. Some of the bacon burned, all of the coffee was over-watered, a few of the bananas were crushed, but everything was pronounced delicious, as in fact it was. A slice of hot bacon clapped into a buttered roll is hard to beat after a morning out of doors.

Two of our kinsfolk from Newtonville, Mass., had never been to Cooperstown, so we drove about the village, visiting the site of Otsego Hall, and the graveyard of the Episcopal church. Here lie Judge William Cooper and Elizabeth Fenimore, his consort, Hannah, older sister of James Fenimore Cooper, who was his first greatly beloved teacher, who was killed by a fall from her horse in 1800, aged twenty-three years, James Fenimore and Susan Augusta De Lancey, his wife, and many children, all bearing his middle name and his mother's name, Fenimore. And a little way off are the graves of Negro servants, like Joe Tom, born in the Barbados. Of Jenny York the little stone says: "Died Feb. 22, 1837, aged 50 years. She had her faults but she was kind to the poor."

So with the villagers who loved him and with those who for a time hated him, with his father "the pioneer," the family connection and the old servants, there sleeps here the immortal creator of the Leatherstocking Tales, and the author of some of our most

vivid stories of the sea. With Washington Irving, he must be regarded as a pioneer of American literature.

We took the long way home, through Milford, Colliers, Maryland, Schenevus, and the Worcesters, crossing the ridge which divides the waters of the Susquehanna from those of the Cobleskill—one of the loveliest parts of what is now widely advertised as the Schohanna Trail.

Just a month later, on a morning after a shower had laid the dust and cleared the air, I motored over and back the short way to visit our church and lend a hand to the faithful minister, Thomas Chapman, who from Georgia and Florida and the Carolinas, Kentucky, Illinois and other states, has found his way to this attractive place on the shores of Otsego Lake.

The minister of Fort Plain and one of his right-hand men were there with Chapman to greet me, friends from Oneonta, others from Richfield, schoolmates of forty years ago, and cottagers from the lake. Here was another Cooperstown, the part of it bound to us by the same precious faith, the same great inheritance.

The drive over the hills in the dewy freshness of the morning was ideal preparation for a service. Worship with these dear friends was ideal preparation for the drive back, when an even more glorious light lay on the hills.

September 12, 1930.

CHAPTER XVIII

WHEN EVERY BUSH WAS ABLAZE

IN a dense fog we left Albany on the 7.15 a. m. train. It was a wonder that we were on time, for the railroad yards were choked with Pullman cars coming from the American Legion Convention in Boston. We could only dimly see the day boat at her dock near the tracks and the night boat just coming in from New York. It seemed as if I had chosen the worst time possible to go to the farm, get the car and make a quick trip to New Jersey.

But the fog, as so often happens, was purely local. As we began to climb the long grade along the Normanskill, light began to break through.

In five miles we were out of the fog, and pounding steadily along under a cloudless sky through fields all wet with dew and glistening in golden sunlight. Although it was almost Columbus Day none of the leaves had fallen. The trees on the Altamont level were green, yellow and gold, with here and there traces of pink. I knew from long experience that more vivid color was just ahead. The corn that had not been put into the silos stood bound neatly in shocks. The meadows were raked clean. The apple orchards were heavily laden with red and yellow fruit. Less than a week before I had been in northern Florida, rejoicing in the beauty of palm and orange tree. Now I had before me the only thing that in loveliness can measure up to orange, lemon or grapefruit harvest, the gathering of the apples.

A few miles farther on we struck the pastures, the meadows and roadsides where the bushes had not been cut so clean. Now past us began to flit the

purples of the berry bushes, the scarlets and dark reds of the sumachs. No good for fire wood is this sumach, no good to eat, no good for lumber—and yet how much it adds to the landscape. It is like a girl dumb but beautiful. We must needs be gentle in our judgment of the girl and the sumach, for both are good to look at. And the sumach fills its niche in the scheme of things. It shelters birds, and I suspect that the flicker finds food in a sumach thicket from the way he hangs around it. And what bare, sterile corners its dense growth fills.

Soon I dropped everything to look out, for we were beyond Altamont and climbing rapidly. The brakeman joined me, for I was in the plain man's club —the smoking car. Then came a Jewish drummer to look out with us. Finally the conductor shut his tin box and came over too.

Said the brakeman: "This is the best morning for color we have had yet. See that 'shoemake,' Jim. Look off through that gully. Isn't that purty?" "Yes," said the conductor. "I've been all over this country and down to Mexico, and I never see any stretch of country to equal this run out from Albany to Binghamton."

Soon we were deep in a discussion of a purple-leafed tree. The drummer suggested oak, but was voted down unanimously, for most of the oaks were green. The conductor said basswood, but the brakeman stood strenuously for ash. I think he was right, for we found that our white ashes at the farm were purple. Now we had our reds and crimsons in full measure, mostly maple, among the yellows of other maples and birches, and with the glossy green of oaks and darker green of pines to set them off. In his enthusiasm the old brakeman said it was the prettiest this fall it had been in years, but I questioned that. It made me happy, though, to think that I had so

suddenly chosen just this day for my long deferred errand to New Jersey.

The little car was ready at Cobleskill. A call or two, and I was off with my brother, along the familiar road to the farm. The foliage grew more and more vivid as I went farther into the hills. How the heart leaps up on such a morning, in such a valley, as one floats along a beloved road with every turn, every house and garden, every side-hill pasture and mountain, transformed with autumn color!

At the farm to which we had said good-by only five weeks before, everything was changed. The entire hollow had put on new garments. The dark mountain sides were lighted up. The birch and maple among the evergreens made even the greenest, steepest slopes appear festive. The leaves in the orchards were green, but there was a big crop of apples to supply color there. Along Stony Creek just below the house there was a riot of color—red maple, mountain maple, sugar maple, purple colored ash, yellow elm and poplar, golden butternut, dark red sumach —and on all these fell the light of one of our most perfect October days.

I remembered a line of Augustus Bomberger about the sun in an apple, and looked up the verse:

> There's part of the sun in an apple,
> There's part of the moon in a rose;
> There's part of the flaming Pleiades
> In every leaf that grows.
> Out of the vast comes nearness:
> For the God whose love we sing
> Lends a little of His heaven
> To every living thing.

There seemed a great deal of heaven down on this earth that morning.

But I had far to go. When we broke up the summer home along the sedges, down where the

Shrewsbury and Navesink Rivers join forces and move on north to Sandy Hook Bay, we left a lot of breakables that we did not want to ship—pictures, dishes, bric-a-brac, and what not. For two years I had been promising to go down and get them out of a barn. Now the time had come.

Here is the marvel of the automobile. At ten in the morning I am picking up snow apples in an orchard in the hills, or listening to the trickle of the water, far away from everybody and everything. Then I step into a little vehicle, touch a button, shift a lever, and the open road is before me. It leads on and on over the sky line to the next sky line, until day ends with me in a totally different environment, two hundred and forty miles away.

First the road was our own steep hill, going past our own high fields. Then in a little more than a mile I came up out of the hollow, off the narrow, stony, bush shaded road to modern macadam, which traverses our county from north to south. There the little car purred and sang and skimmed away to the south. At no time on the trip was I as high up as when I reached our own hill top and started down the good road. This place was truly named Summit. We always claim that "it is the highest incorporated village in New York State."

For ten hours I was pretty steadily at the wheel. To cover ground if one is not a speed king one must keep rolling. In that ten hours I motored through the heart of the Catskill Mountains, down the Hudson Valley, over the Storm King Highway, into the lovely towns and cities of northern Jersey, past the monstrous municipality at the mouth of the Hudson, into Newark at just the rush hour and then on down to the seashore at Rumson and Seabright.

It was a great relief to sniff at last the salt air, and turn into a familiar gate. As I shut off the motor

I heard a thundering roar a mile away. The wind was east and the noise of the surf came rolling over the beach, the river and the sedge.

The next day, on a new road that ran around Elizabeth and Newark, I went back to the farm in eight hours.

It is not difficult to list the things of this trip that will stick longest in my mind. Some parts of the road will become jumbled. Some of the views will quickly grow indistinct. But it will be long before I forget—

The little lake at Summit, blue and silver in the morning light, and the view across it to the higher Catskills from twenty to forty miles away.

The magnificent panorama of the Hudson Valley spread out before the traveler at East Windham, N. Y., and the realization that this view always will be waiting for us only forty-seven miles from the farm.

The Highlands of the Hudson, the curves of the river that even a hurried traveler can get as he motors on and on. Storm King himself softened and beautiful in the afternoon light.

An arch showing up above the Palisades which I was told was the arch of the Cathedral of St. John the Divine, and a tower gleaming like burnished gold at the sunset hour, which I was told was the Chrysler Building, rising clear above the Palisades and signaling to travelers on every near-by Jersey road, "Here stands New York."

A maelstrom of traffic, a welter of people, a dizzy maze of avenues and a nightmare of lights—Newark as the day's work ended and thousands were starting home from work. "Conservatively," I said to my hostess that night, "there were a vigintillion of lights all headed straight for me."

The big yellow moon coming up out of the sea,

speaking reassurance and peace after I had escaped from Hades and reached the Raritan River.

Coming back there was no Storm King Highway, no panorama from the Windham Mountain, no setting sun on the higher towers of New York.

But there were things to remember. One was the magnificent three-strip boulevard from the seashore leading to an elevated highway and the new Holland Tunnels under the Hudson River to New York. This was the road that enabled me to keep out of Newark. So I think of it as a kind of Heavenly Way. Leaving this road just before the tunnel one can take an equally fine road up the west side of the Hudson to Newburgh, Kingston, Catskill and Albany.

Always to be remembered also was the drive back through the Ramapo Hills, past Tuxedo and Arden on the western side of the Palisades Interstate Park. Here was some of the best color of the trip.

The sun had just set at Catskill when I turned my back to the river and started toward the irregular line of the mountains beautifully etched against the sunset sky. For eight or ten miles I was going straight toward what looked like an impassable barrier. Then round and round we began to curve—the brave little car making light of my heavy load, and without a single shift of gear climbing quickly to the summit.

The last two hours of the journey after dark were a mere nothing compared with the last two hours in Newark and its surrounding towns going down.

The roads were clear and I could make time. There could be no leisurely twenty or twenty-five miles an hour on this trip. But on the big roads the little car seemed just as safe and steady at forty and forty-five as at twenty. And to average twenty-eight, as I did coming back, one had to keep moving steadily all the time, and "hit it up" when the road was straight

and clear. The only disadvantage of speed is that one reaches a town so quickly that he thinks he must be on a wrong road.

The best part of the trip was on the road from Stamford to Summit, looking off into deep moonlit valleys, and realizing that I was getting home. The only anxiety I had was the moon. It was too far to the left for a man who thought he was traveling north. Like the red man who said to his white brother, "Indian no lost, tote road lost," I was tempted to say, "Johannes no wrong—moon gone wrong." Eventually I decided that the Summit-Stamford road could not be the north and south line that I had imagined, which is a fact. Down at last I turned into our hollow—the moon now high enough to top the ridge and to shine full upon the barn buildings—into the wagon-house with the car, and then light and fire and supper.

An electric lantern by the back door of the house showed the way to the cellar, a single turn of a switch brought on the lights, a newspaper, two or three old shingles and a box cover made a fire in the fireplace, which soon was all ready to take on some old apple limbs. Then I had a warming and a cheering blaze. There was no bread, butter, milk or cheese in the house, but I never close up in the fall without leaving a can or two of beans put up by a firm of brothers in a suburb of Boston who mix character in with the food they can.

The luxury of those beans, after a day with little to eat, after eight hours of steady driving, after toil and responsibility were ended! For dessert I opened a can of pineapple. For ambrosia and nectar I made a cup of fragrant hot coffee. It was cold everywhere in the house except in front of the fire. What of it? Who wanted to leave that fire? One after another passed in procession through my brain the hot dog

stands, the tea rooms, the summer hotels, the farm houses which say "Tourists accommodated." They all doubtless had some merit attached to them, some were set down in picturesque places, but I blessed the fates that had kept me at the wheel and enabled me to reach such a haven for my evening meal. I had not gone all day without food. I had had a generous breakfast at Black Point. Annie, the cook, had come rushing with three sandwiches when she found that I was leaving before luncheon. And I had enjoyed these sandwiches just as I was passing from northern New Jersey to New York. But I had had in mind all day some such meal as I now spread out on the little table before the fire, and this time anticipation took a back seat for realization.

Another cause for anxiety now happily over had been this: After we had loaded the car solid up even with the back window, I suddenly bethought myself. To the faithful gardener who had been laboring with me for three hours that forenoon I said: "Chris, what if I get a puncture? How'll I reach under the back seat to get my tools?" He scratched his head dubiously, and then said: "Just pray you won't get a puncture."

My brother, when I related this incident, said: "You would have felt cheap if you had unloaded your car to get at your tools. Your tools are under your front seat."

While we were packing the car I heard a whirring of motors, and running out from under the oaks I saw the airship Los Angeles, attended by two short stubby blimps, flying low down and moving swiftly and steadily north.

But of all that I saw on the journey—the mountains and river valleys, cities and suburbs, farms and estates, even old ocean itself, nothing made quite the impression that did our dark hollow from the Summit

road with all the upper woods and fields shining in the light of the hunter's moon.

On these things I thought as I sat by the fire, calling up scene after scene while they were etched clear and distinct on the brain. Then an all-night chunk of knotty maple for the fire, a bed made on a couch pulled around near the blaze, and to sleep. It would have to be more powerful coffee than I can brew to make me toss about after such a trip.

LATE OCTOBER AT THE FARM

CHAPTER XIX

IN LATE OCTOBER

WHETHER we are making excuses to go to the farm or things actually are happening to make our presence imperative, I do not know, but we seem to be going more frequently. At the very end of October we find ourselves there again—"to stay over election."

Part of our wanting to go doubtless comes from fixing up the place and making it more cosy and cheery. Part of our ability to go comes from the Madame discovering how easy the trip from Boston really is.

When we first went to Boston to live, to hear her describe it one would think that the city was situated about eight hundred miles northeast of Newfoundland. Now she has discovered that it actually lies in the United States and one can get to it and from it on some of the best trains in the country. Our last two trips from the farm to Boston we have made by daylight, and have shortened the journey by using the motor car to Albany and Troy.

As so often happens, the day we left Boston was dark and rainy, but as we went west it cleared up and the sun shone. Many of the trees and bushes were bare, but some of the autumn coloring was left. The leaves on the apple trees were green, and on some of the pear trees they were purple, and few leaves seemed to have fallen in the orchards.

An "in-law" who is always ready to help us and a dear friend who came along for the ride met us in Albany with the car. Soon we were stowed away and I took the wheel and headed west. The afternoon

was so beautiful and the roadsides so attractive that we took the long route over the Helderbergs which we always used before the straighter, newer route along an old turnpike was built. Our road out of Albany for a few miles went up and down the hillocks of an undulating plain, through Slingerland and New Scotland, and then straight up "the double S."

Twenty years ago we heard much more about the double S than we do to-day. There are many broad, hard roads running in every direction in this region. But when the double S was built to carry one of the trunk lines of the state southwest to the southern tier of counties, it was regarded as an engineering feat.

As one curves around and around on this beautiful road one catches glimpses of the State Education Building and the State Capitol in Albany a dozen miles away. On one side of us was the wooded ridge that we were climbing, brown and orange and burnt orange with the last of the color. On the other side was the plain stretching away into the misty distance that meant Albany, Troy, down east and up north.

"That is the worst of it," said Mary, as I pulled a soft hat down over my eyes. "Coming out from Albany at this time of day we have to drive squarely into the sun." But the road curved to the right and to the left of the sun and I could see the vivid coloring which appeared farther on, and the steep Helderbergs themselves now and then took care of the sun and let me drive in the shadow. Though I had laryngitis and had pretty much lost my voice, I was in high spirits. There was no need to talk anyway, with three ladies in the car. I might not have been permitted to talk if I had tried. So all went well. We had a glorious forty-eight mile drive through East Berne, Berne and West Berne, entering Schoharie County near Gallupville. We went down Fox's Creek, or

the Foxenkill, along which there trudged in 1712 a party of poor German immigrants to make the first settlement along the Schoharie. Smoothly, swiftly, comfortably, we rolled over the hill and down into the valley where they came on foot to face wild animals, wild Indians, cold winters and a scanty living. The sun, a red ball, was sinking below the sky line as we looked down into this beautiful valley. We had the loveliest hour of the day for the last dozen miles, up our own valley, in the twilight when everything stood out distinctly on the hilltops and when the valleys began to suggest the mystery of the coming night. Light, fire, food, rest, familiar furniture, kinsfolk, happy talk, drowsiness, beds, a sense of home—all this was at the end of the road.

We got to the farm about noon the next day—and verily it did look like moving day! The painter had moved many things out of the kitchen so as to give the floor a new coat of bright yellow paint, and the furniture was piled in the living room. It was cold outside, and raw, chilly and penetrating inside. The Madame, sad to say, for a time was the leader of the opposition, because of my cold. But, as I often tell her, no man is as easy to get along with as I. All I want is my own way. Especially is that true of me and of most men in matters affecting health. I simply knew that I should be all right if I tramped around in the good mountain air, and I was. With every lick of work, every armful of wood, every piece of furniture hauled into place, my voice came back. In a jiffy the big logs were burning in the fireplace, the kitchen range was hot, the bacon was sizzling in the skillet, the coffee was giving off its odor, the eggs were chasing the bacon out of the way, and we were having a delicious luncheon. Nor were these ordinary logs that were burning, they were logs predestined from all eternity for this hour, nor ordinary bacon, but from hogs (so

I infer from the advertisements) whose fathers and grandfathers had eaten beechnuts daily, and who themselves had absorbed the flavor of beechnuts with their first liquid rations. And there were cocktails for this banquet made of tomatoes and simply surcharged (so the notice said) with vitamine double X or Y or Z.

It was a rather curious day. The sun kept disappearing and reappearing. The darkest kind of cumulus clouds rolled up, broke, reformed, and went on. A few sprinkles of rain fell. The wind blew up damp and cold. A few late birds were fluttering about the pear tree. Just at sunset the sun came out again long enough to touch the hilltops with red light. About the middle of the afternoon I went down to the church to see what had been done. Only one man was there—a veteran who had been up to paint the weathervane at the top of the tower. All of his ladders were in place. Here was my chance. In a moment I was on the newly shingled roof, and then up to the newly metaled ridgepole. Here stood another ladder, a home-made affair, against the tower, and up I went—past the belfry. At last I stood where for years the weathervane had been misrepresenting the points of the compass. It was well worth the effort and not at all dangerous, for the carpenters had put a scaffolding around the tower. They had been pulling off the rotten tin and taking out the rotten supports and making all strong and tight again. We have always known that we could see the church tower from practically everywhere in the hollow and from all the hills around. Now I know we can see all the hollow and every hill from the top of the tower.

Far off along the brow of one of the hills I saw three men moving—Tiny and George and the hired man, the painter said, going into the woods for the winter firewood. "Golly, it's coming up raw," said

the painter. "I'm glad I am through for to-day." I, too, was ready to go back by the open fire, and doze in the big chair and dream of the places that the firewood comes from, beautiful "not only in the summer time but in the winter's frost and rime."

On the eve of All Saints' Day—Hallowe'en—there was no hint in our hollow of the mad pranks which seem so at variance with the thought of all saints. The night came on cold. The thermometer went down to 36 degrees, but our kitchen range and open fireplace kept us warm. Up the new stepping-stones from the rebuilt wood cellar under the wagon-house, I came just at dark with the last load of wood. No sign all day of the man who helps us about the place. His wedding day was only four days off, but he was not busy with wedding garments; he was in the woods hard at work. The chops cooking on the range had an appetizing smell. I prescribed two of them with three dishes of fresh applesauce made from MacIntosh reds, and half a bottle of tomato juice and six or eight thick slices of bread, for my laryngitis. I grew well so fast that the Madame stopped all advice about building up, sitting where it was warm, and taking care of myself. The worst thing a man with laryngitis can do is to take care of himself. (Of course, I admit that there may be slight qualifications to this proposition now and then.) The best thing he can do is to let Mother Nature have a chance at him. All my doctor friends tell me this. It was a good night that we had in our "cold house." The thick chunks that I put on the fire at bed-time lasted until well into the small hours. I have discovered on camping trips that 2 a. m. is a good hour to replenish the fire. So I set my subconscious alarm clock for two and when I woke up on the minute I gave my laryngitis a little exercise as I moved about rebuilding fires. It proved to be the final touch to the cure, and

when morning dawned my voice was back in perfect form.

In the night between October 31 and November 1 a light snow fell on Old Cobble and extended about half way down. The brown stubble showed through, but it was snow sure enough. It was a hint to all of us in the hollow, if hint were needed, that we must make haste, bring in the last of the apples, husk the corn, and get ready for winter.

The day before election day I went into the woods to see where our back logs for next year were coming from. Up the mountain road, then along the high fields and finally into the forest we made our way on foot.

One of the men told of a doe and two fawns which had crossed the road in front of him a few days before, and had come up the hill where we were going. He also described the habits of the gray fox, which is much more plentiful in our section than the red fox. He had killed one in his backyard the week before. The hunting season had opened and every little while we could hear a shot. We have many sportsmen friends, and we try not to be narrow about the matter, but we do hate to see things killed, and we are sure that something vital and picturesque will pass from American life when the wild creatures are gone.

In a level clearing on the mountain-side our friends had set up their engine and saw and brought there the wood crop. That is, they had cut the trees which ought to come out, trimmed them and piled them near the saw. It was a sharp morning, and I was glad to warm my back in the sun and put my feet on a wooden block not quite so cold as the frosty earth. Quickly, easily, the men did their work. One filed the teeth of the saw. The others dug holes for the wheels of the portable engine so that it would not move under the pressure of the work. As axles might

not stand the strain, they felled three or four young ironwoods and took the weight of the engine from the axles.

The engine must have been in perfect order, for it made no fuss about starting. The broad belt was slipped on. A bar was set up so that the belt would not slide off. Chug, chug, went the engine. Zip went the saw. Three men seized a log and eased it toward the fast flying teeth. In a moment they had it and a chunk fell off. Steadily went the work, and the woodpile began to show. I did not stay long, for I had work of my own, but the little outing made me realize again how the machine age has penetrated the remote hollows of our country, and how four men plus the machine could do more work sawing wood in a day than eight or twelve or sixteen could do by hand in a week.

All the summer birds had left us for Florida and South America. The winter residents were with us. The beautiful tree sparrows, winter chippies as they are called, were in the bushes along the road. The chickadees, nuthatches and downy woodpeckers were working industriously on old apple trees. The golden-crowned kinglets flitted all about us while we were picking apples. We heard the jays, the crows, and one of the hawks. Just as we were coming away two robins lighted on the topmost branch of an apple tree and sat there sharply outlined against a wintry sky. The robins may go or they may stay. It all depends on the food supply.

With what pleasure we noticed the few flowers that had survived the cold nights. There were acres and acres of goldenrod, dead and brown. Here and there, however, was a golden spray that had escaped. A bush, a tree, a ditch, a building, had protected it. So with one or two purple asters and little white asters, and many a dandelion might be seen in the thick

grass. As they are about the first to come, they are about the last to go.

We philosophize about death. We submit to it. We even pretend to be cheerful about it. But how we cling to life! It seems as if we were made for life and not death. We cling to the last of the flowers. We want a late fall and an early spring.

November 5, 1930.

AS OUR NEIGHBOR SEES US

CHAPTER XX

A COUNTRY WEDDING

UP on the side of Pine Mountain overlooking our hollow there lives a frail but wiry woman of seventy-seven. She has five children, eighteen grandchildren and eleven great grandchildren, scattered all over our part of New York State. Most of her children, however, live within driving distance of their mother, and one of them, now a man of forty-two, long ago gave up any plans of his own and stayed at home to be with his parents. The mother and son have a little place of thirty or forty acres, and this son also goes out to work for the neighbors, both as farmer and mechanic. He is a good carpenter, handy at painting, and can turn his hand to many kinds of odd jobs. He is the man who keeps an eye on our place in our absence, and does work for us in many capacities. His windows command our fields and buildings. He can see any car that drives into our yard and any prowler in our high fields. If he lets out a good yell, it will carry across the valley to any spot on our farm. By his smoke and lights we know about what time of day it is with him, and by our smoke and lights he can tell meal time and bed time with us.

The father of this family died a little over a year ago. He was sick for seven years. In that time he had a leg amputated, but managed to hobble about and do chores. He was a sturdy, fine-looking man, the son of an equally sturdy, fine-looking man, who was the son of a Scotch immigrant. They all were natural carpenters, not the specialized kind which we are apt to meet to-day, skilful in a few things, but resourceful in all parts of the work. The old man, whom

we knew during the last years of his life, the husband of our neighbor, would be sent for in many kinds of emergencies. He was a master hand at butchering, and also a good veterinary, although not licensed. His main work, however, was building, and he liked nothing better than to tackle some old structure ready to fall down and to save it

His frail-looking wife, who rendered such yeoman service all through his illness, began to falter after his death. Even on a small farm there is almost endless work—washing, baking, cleaning, churning, canning, getting the meals, and taking care of chickens. Who can list the duties of a woman on a farm?

At last she fell sick and her son had to have help. A neighbor recommended a cousin from back on one of our highest hills. She had been working out to help support her small child since the death of her husband, a year before. She came, was kind to the old lady, proved herself a great hand to work, and speedily won a place in the affections of both mother and son. The natural thing happened. A romance sprang up between the bachelor and the woman, and so in September we were engaged for the wedding.

The day fixed for the wedding was election day. The bride to be did not intend to lose her vote by changing her status just before election. It seems that a year ago, at Summit, the vote of a girl who had married the day before election had been challenged on the ground that her legal residence was that of her husband, and that by marrying she had moved out of her election district and lost her vote. No chances were taken by our wedding party. On the morning of election day, bright and early, the brother of the groom came with his car and took the contracting parties to Summit, two and one-half miles away, where they voted. Then they came back to get ready.

In the beginning we had expected to give the

wedding dinner at our farmhouse, but the brothers and sisters of the groom said that this must be their responsibility. So one sister came up from her home nine miles away, and another, the mother of nine children, from her home four miles away, and the others joined in, and they prepared the wedding feast at the groom's home up the hill.

Nor must we leave out the mother in the story of the preparations. When we called to arrange for the ceremony she was sitting close to the kitchen stove peeling potatoes. Never did I see fingers fly faster. It was fascinating to see her pick up a long potato, make a few passes with a sharp knife, and toss it into a kettle. No matter how ill she may seem, this frail-looking old lady is one of the people who revive in emergencies and make things fly. Nor was the bride far behind. With pail and mop she dealt with the floors. With axe and chopping block outside she dealt with some Rhode Island Red chickens. When she got really into action, Tim, the veteran old watch-dog, made tracks for the cellar.

All of the wedding party came to our house for the ceremony. It took place in our large sitting room before the open fire. There were ten of us present in all. It was raw and cold outside, the sky was overcast, the smoke of the chimneys drifted down to the ground. A storm was predicted, but inside it was bright and cheery. The Madame had no flowers, but had made the rooms beautiful with ferns from the deep woods where the frost had not been able to reach them.

By the narrowest of margins we had a house for the ceremony. We came near burning out that wedding morning. It happened this way:

Being unable to purchase a screen for our fireplace in any near-by town, I had made one, after the fireplace was built, of metal window screens. It catches

all the flying embers except the five per cent that go over the top. Scientifically this five per cent ought to be negligible, but it is not. Near this fireplace we have a cot on which is a mattress and a couch cover. As the Madame had been sleeping on the couch these cold nights at the farm, it had bed clothing on it also. I had kept the fires up all night, rising at twelve and at three to put on the maple chunks and then going to sleep again at once. There was a fine bed of coals when we went out to breakfast, and I threw on an armful of hemlock hop-poles cut into three-foot lengths. I heard them snapping like fire-crackers, but all I thought of was the heat that they were producing. We stayed out in the kitchen longer than usual, getting things ready to go down in the car when we left. Then I smelled smoke and investigated. As I entered the sitting room I saw three small columns of smoke going straight up from three widely separated spots on the couch. In a moment or two I had snuffed the fires out. My negligible five per cent of embers had started three fires, any one of which, if left alone, would have burned up our house. The larger ember had gone through the comforter, sheets, couch cover, and was well down in the filling of the mattress. The smaller ones were still working merrily on the cotton of the comforter. The moral to us was plain: Have no negligible five per cent. Don't leave fires unprotected. Use the hop-poles only when you intend to stay to see the fireworks. Make your screen cover the entire opening. Perhaps our farmhouse will stand another seventy-five years because of this instructive incident.

The wedding party was on time. A jolly old uncle of the bride from a distant city, a brother of the groom and his wife, two married sisters and the seventy-five year old mother formed a circle around the couple. The words were said, the tension re-

WHERE THE WEDDING GUESTS DINED

laxed, the congratulations began. There could be no long delay, however. In our hollow, the people do their own work. Up the mountain road we motored with the wedding guests to the warmth and cheer of the little house perched high above us. By half-past one dinner was ready! Biscuits in gravy, bowls of gravy, the tenderest possible chicken, heaping dishes of mashed potatoes, baked pork and beans—New York style, not Boston—cold slaw, pickles, jellies, two kinds of pie, bride's cake, groom's cake, jello with whipped cream, candies, coffee, cigars, and much more besides. Best of all, I had been tugging and pulling at bags of apples in the sharp mountain air, bringing in wood and doing various chores, so I was ready for it. Capable hands prepared and served that dinner. Competent appetites did full justice to it.

We could not linger long. We had water to shut off, pipes to drain, a house to put to rights and close up, our ballots to cast at a polling place seven miles away, and a train to catch for Boston. The jolly old uncle was very deaf. He thought I could not hear. "As soon as the minister goes," he said, "we'll have a Highland fling." I turned back and called out: "On with the dance. The minister is just going." Without any stimulant but the pure air and good food, we all were merry.

That night, we were told, all the friends of the groom from miles around came up and serenaded him and were invited in for candy, cigars and other refreshments. So started another home. As a faithful devoted son almost always makes a faithful devoted husband, this marriage ought to be a happy one.

November 8, 1930.

CHAPTER XXI

GOING HOME TO VOTE IN 1929

THE very fact that we have a residence in the old home town, up in Schoharie County, New York, shows how changing a thing "residence" in these days is, and yet how fixed. If people have ties and interests in more than one place, if they do one kind of work in Boston and another in New York, hang on to a little apartment in Washington and go to the old home town at various odd times, and pay taxes there, it might take a Philadelphia lawyer to apply the voting laws of the various states to their cases. One red-hot fight of my life centered about this very matter of having kept my residence in Cobleskill, N. Y., for some years after becoming pastor of a church in Washington, D. C., giving it up because of the trouble and expense of going home to vote, and then having some people interested in defeating me for the post of Commissioner of the District of Columbia, to which I had been appointed, attempt to force residence upon me in New York, and thus automatically disqualify me for the appointment. They did not succeed in the residence matter for the simple reason that the stupid old lawyer whom they sent up to get evidence photographed my father's name on the voting list and circulated the pictures in Washington, to his great discomfiture when the facts came out. All state laws differ in this matter. In the absence of specific clauses dealing with particular cases, courts consider intent. They ask the voter, "What place do you regard as home?" For me there is only one answer to this question. It is where I came from, where I still spend some of my

best moments, and where probably I shall be buried. It ought to be added also that in a place like Cobleskill, N. Y., where every one knows every one else, the law is applied in a spirit of equity and common sense. Men say, "He ought to have a right to vote here if he wants to, and he shall if we can find a way." So Republicans and Democrats co-operate in the matter.

In the District of Columbia, people do not have a vote. Government officials therefore are protected by a special statute and allowed to keep a voting residence in the state they come from. This statute does not apply to people living in Washington not in government service, and such people lose their votes unless they have property or summer homes or other interests that their home states will recognize as constituting a residence.

All this is the preface of my story, "Going Home to Vote." The voting was part of it—going home was the greater part of it. There was no exciting state or national election pending. An old school friend was running for county judge, and there was a sentimental interest in voting for him, although he had no opposition. I do not remember a time when such a thing occurred before. It was especially fitting to have it occur with a candidate for a judgeship, an office which ought to be out of partisan politics. I was glad to have my old friend honored by the nomination of three parties.

It was a rainy morning I had in going home. The rain pattered on the roof of the sleeper in the Albany yards, and made music in the open ventilators. It was dripping from the eaves when I got out, standing in puddles, pulling the steam of locomotives down to earth. Out in the open country on the old D. & H. train, it fell on beds of leaves newly fallen and beat the late hanging leaves down. The taller trees stood

in winter garb, outlined distinct against the somber sky. The apple trees were hanging fast to some of their yellow leaves. Some of the oaks and maples showed a few leaves dead and brown. The fields had partly lost their green. Sunday morning, arriving too late for church, no responsibility about a service, eyes too tired to read, incessant rain, a train that stopped at almost every cross road, but not an unpleasant moment. One was going home.

"Home in a few moments," I wrote the Madame in a letter dated "Howes Cave and Beyond." "Barnerville just flying by. No one in sight. Old Donats Mountain looming up. Now Shank's Mountain in full sight. Passing the lower crossing, John in the road with his stop sign, cheerful smoke rising from his shanty, not a motor car on the road for him to halt. Time to fasten my brief-case and get on my coat. It is a different air up here. One feels it even in the train. An impalpable something is felt the moment one crosses the line into Schoharie County."

That afternoon I tried my hand at a new model of a Ford car—a closed car that could be opened up—a canary yellow car with black markings, a regular goldfinch of a car, a smart, sporty looking car even if it was a Ford. We went up to the little hill farm to look over the repairs and to plan for next spring. The striking thing about the trip was that I drove the last three miles over clay roads which were simply swimming in water and the little car kept to the track without a single slip. In the summer we debate whether or not we will drive over that road even if a mere sprinkle has fallen. It is known to be slippery. My lawyer brother has been known to go into the ditch in the darkness of a stormy night, and be hauled out by horses. On such a road, always it is a question whether one had better stay in the ruts and perhaps sink down too deep to move, or stay out of the ruts

and perhaps slip into the ditch. Public spirited citizens who want to help save the roads stay out of the ruts until they have a taste of the ditch. Then they adopt the old French cry, *"Sauve qui peut"* (Let him save himself who can), and drive where they think they can make it. I took to the rut, and it was so deep that a derrick would have been necessary to lift me high enough to slide anywhere. Stony Creek, dry last summer, was rushing down over the rocks. No danger now of winter setting in with a dry creek bed.

The little farm was lonely. The rain was over but the skies were gray. The rain clouds still hovered over the high hills. The excavation for our new side porch was a mud hole. Not a bird made a sound. Not a woodchuck showed his head. Not a dog could be heard barking. Not a mower, or reaper, or tractor, or hammer, or axe, could be heard in the distance. It was a gloomy deserted little hill farm on a dripping day in November.

Inside the house it was damp and cold. If the Madame had been there, if logs had been blazing in a fireplace, if the sitting room had been warm, if the curtains had been drawn and lamps lighted, if the odor of wiener snitzels or beefsteak had been coming from the kitchen, it would have been a different story. If one is to like a storm, one must prepare a fire as a foil to it.

Getting back to Cobleskill, I speedily discovered that I had run into a regular hornets' nest of an election. Not in the memory of the oldest inhabitant (not the present writer), had there been a hotter fight. It was the old wet vs. dry fight with complications. The complications were that both sides were accused of being wet and both claimed to be dry. The Democratic party, traditionally wet in New York State, especially claimed to be dry and probably was

entitled to be called the dry party. The Republican party, traditionally dry in the state, was especially under fire for being wet.

The contest centered on the offices of district attorney and sheriff for the county of Schoharie. It had been getting more and more bitter during the closing weeks of the campaign. The local papers gave names, dates, places, to substantiate their charges. The editors got up at 4 a. m. to write leaders. Reprints of editorials, hand-bills containing affidavits, last minute charges, last minute rejoinders, were posted all over town and left on the doorsteps of the houses. After I had gone to bed Sunday night and had fallen asleep, I was awakened by quick steps springing up on the porch and then dashing off. It was a last minute pronouncement of a candidate for supervisor (our town representative in the county legislative assembly). The contests became so acrimonious and bitter that they lost all of their bitterness. That is, the thing was overdone to such an extent that candidates and voters began to laugh, and once the laughter started the air speedily cleared.

The contest over the office of district attorney was complicated by issues trivial as well as important. The Democratic nominee for the office—honestly dry—a reformer type, had bolted the regular ticket some time before, run as an independent and helped defeat the regular nominee of his party. Therefore the ultra regulars found it hard to back him. The wet Democrats, of whom there are a few left, garden spot though Schoharie County is, likewise were lukewarm, to put it mildly, in his behalf.

But the Republican nominee for district attorney—a young fellow who had held the office for one term—put over the amazing feat of securing the support both of leading bootleggers and of the drys whose record was beyond reproach. A civic league publica-

tion in Albany, edited by a former clergyman, almost fanatical in its dry position, which previously had accused this young fellow of selling out to booze, came out strenuously in his support. What could the Democratic reformer do against this kind of combination? It was much as if Al Smith and Calvin Coolidge had united against Norman Thomas. The district attorney was re-elected by a large majority.

But with the shrievalty, a fine word I have just learned from my brother in the law, it was a different story. As running mate for their young district attorney the Republicans had chosen a former hotelkeeper, an upright, respectable man, but he was at once placed on the defensive in this wet and dry contest by his former occupation. The Democrats nominated for sheriff an honest fellow who had worked on a farm and who never had held public office, who went by the name of "Honest Dick."* Honest Dick made the tactical blunder of claiming, or some one else made the blunder of claiming for him, that "he knew not the taste of wine, beer, whiskey, or cider." This was going it rather strong, even in old Schoharie. But the blunder was retrieved and turned into a Waterloo for his opponent by the use that the opposition committee made of the claim. They proceeded to get affidavits from three farm hands who were neighbors of Honest Dick or had worked with him, which set forth in detail that on or about such and such a date this aforesaid Honest Dick did knowingly come to them and crave their assistance in the removal of a lot of wine and cider from one place to another, that in the course of the proceeding he did fill a jug of said wine for each of his helpers and one for himself, and did take it home, and that he did roll or

*In the summer of 1930 Honest Dick (Sheriff Steadman) was shot and killed by a prisoner making an attempt to escape.

cause to be rolled and lifted into his truck sundry barrels of the aforesaid wine and cider, and did move the same to a secure and safe place where he did turn a key upon it. The artistic touch of the affidavits was that the aforesaid Honest Dick did take a horse blanket and did cover the aforesaid barrels with it after they had been put in the truck. As I read these affidavits on the eve of the election, I remarked to my brother: "These affidavits are apt to elect the man they are aimed at. The farmers will rise up *en masse* against anybody who attempts to attack a man for doing what they consider legitimate farm work, and the horse blanket will be the final touch. Also people generally won't think too highly of getting his comrades in the work to go back on him." And so it turned out. While the Republican candidate for district attorney was elected by nearly 2,200 votes, the Republican candidate for sheriff was defeated by 189. Honest Dick had been vindicated.

Sometimes voters minimize the importance of local elections. They laugh at the intense interest that people take in things near home. They themselves go home to vote only for President or Governor. Such people do not understand our scheme of government. The people who get excited over school director, constable, assessor, supervisor or town superintendent of highways, have a truer instinct. They know that these offices deal with matters that affect them directly. They themselves have to ride over the roads that are built. They have to see the constable in action. They pay taxes on what the assessor says their property is worth. And their own children possibly are made or marred for life by the schools. Preachers, lecturers, publicists, editors and all others who make public opinion do well to interest people in state and national politics, but not at the expense of local politics. The greater the intelligence locally,

the greater the hope of intelligent action on the national stage.

Ninety-five hundred and forty of us in Schoharie County voted at this election of 1929.

It was an illuminating experience for some of us.

When my assistant read my account of this visit to the old home town and the little hill farm she pulled out of a drawer of her desk this poem by Odell Shepard called "The Little Towns."

Great cities are most wonderful;
I love their domes of smoke
And miles and miles of avenues
Crowded full of folk.
And no man looks at mountains
More lovingly than I
When sunset paints them sharp and clear
Upon the western sky.

. . . . . .

But best I love the little towns
With leisure to be wise,
Brooding over many things,
With quiet in their eyes.
The little towns are my best friends,
Most innocent and dear—
Oh, these I have loved best of all
For many a happy year.

November 15, 1929.

CHAPTER XXII

CHRISTMAS AT THE OLD HOME

ON the night of the 23d, another storm struck us. Boston, which had escaped the bad sleet of the 20th, this time got its full share. There were snow and sleet, two inches of slush, well trampled, and then a sudden freeze. On the morning of the 24th, when we looked out, ice covered everything. It was very slippery. In a sporty little car a friend came to take us to the station, only three or four squares away, where we boarded the North Shore Limited for Albany.

The sleet storm had gripped the country. "A white Christmas assured for the city," said the *New York Times*. "Snow covers the nation." There was not much snow around Boston, but it was well placed. It sheathed trees and buildings, and when the sun came out it made a glittering landscape.

Although we had bought tickets two weeks ahead we had been unable to secure seats in the parlor car, and had to take reservations in a Chicago-bound sleeper. It was a modern Pullman, beautifully finished, and had divisions which almost made it a compartment car. To our mind it was superior in comfort and privacy to the chair car.

On the platform in Albany was the soldier brother, who had motored up from Washington to Cobleskill and come into Albany by train for a day in the old book shops, and also to meet us.

That morning eight and a half inches of snow had fallen in Cobleskill, and enough in Albany to make things clean and beautiful. On the local train we found a boyhood friend who has made a success of

COBLESKILL IN WINTER

life, Dr. Thomas E. Finegan, forty-eight years in education as country school teacher, school commissioner, deputy state commissioner of education for New York, commissioner of education for Pennsylvania, and now head of the new subsidiary of the Eastman Kodak Company of Rochester, N. Y., which is putting educational films on the market. As we drew Finegan out about this last job that he has taken on, it seemed to us as if all his life had been a preparation for it. Though technically now in big business rather than the profession of education, he made us realize that he never before has had such opportunities for service as he has now. He knows too much about education to dream of substituting anything for old-fashioned hard study, but he has come to see how much the eye can be made to help even in technical studies like medicine. Keen, warm-hearted, magnetic, young, though he must be sixty, he gave us a great time.

I took him back in memory to the time when I was teaching on a hill-top in the town of Fulton and he was teaching down in the valley under me. He had begun on the hill-tops the year before and had been promoted. Paradoxical as it may sound, the higher one goes in district school teaching usually the lower the pay. We recalled also how I, a boy of sixteen, took off my coat and worked for his election as school commissioner. Then he went back a full fifty-five years to a speech made by my father when father was a young lawyer serving as school commissioner and Finegan was a small boy in a country school. "Your father," he said, "made a speech I have remembered fifty-five years. It was in West Fulton. A boy had just run up a long column of figures on the blackboard and got it right the first time. The teacher had collected copy books and showed them to your father. He took the column of figures and one of the copy

books as his subject. He spoke on taking time to do the thing right, on finishing what one begins, and always doing one's best. 'If this boy had made one mistake,' he said, 'the result would have been spoiled. And how much better is this writing than if the line slanted up or slanted down.' He made it so plain to us little boys and girls that I have remembered it all my life."

'We have just passed an important boundary," said Finegan a moment later. "Schoharie County," I exclaimed. "Where was it?" said the Colonel. "By the last farmhouse," replied the former school commissioner. "I know every foot of this ground. Here is Esperance station." The hills of old Schoharie were showing up ahead. Right and left ran the beautiful valley of the Schoharie, which we crossed to enter the valley of the Cobleskill. Quiet and peaceful it looked in winter garb, snow in evidence but not dominating the scene as it does sometimes, the prominent thing being the wooded hills, cold and somber in the light of the late afternoon, but not forbidding to returning native sons.

My brother's big Buick was at the station. It pushed bravely through the snow—up Division Street, along Main, up Grand, and then suddenly there showed up the big square house, lighted from front to rear and top to bottom. In the parlor the Christmas tree was shining with tiny electric bulbs. In the sitting room the fire was leaping on the hearth. In the dining room soon a large baked ham was put on the table, cloves sticking out all over it, and its fragrance filling the house. The pie in my honor had been made of the canned mincemeat of a friend whose name is not unlike friend, and it was pronounced "perfect." More than one friend, however, had had a finger in that pie. I read aloud the editorial from the *New York World* advising everybody to go

on to a lettuce and spinach diet two days before Christmas so that they would be anxious to bite into something with gravy on it, but the only result was to send everybody back enthusiastically for second helpings of ham. It was a beautiful Christmas Eve, with carols around the piano, and a trip down town to see the lights and to go through the stores. Then the stockings to be hung and things put in them, but by that time the two cats and I in a big chair were jumbling Boston, Albany, Cobleskill, the firelight, Christmas cards, ham, and various other things together in our respective dreams.

On the Sunday before Christmas I had visited Amesbury, Mass., in the valley of the Merrimac, and had seen the old home of Whittier. Driving then ten miles to Haverhill to take a train, I had passed the farmhouse where the poet was born, a little house under the hill. We did not go in, but we saw the apple trees, the brook, the fields and woods, that he loved. The thought of Whittier and of "Snowbound" was good preparation for Christmas at the old home.

It was a white world that we looked out upon Christmas morning. The snow storm did not hold up traffic like the great sleet storm of a week or so before, but it made a pure white Christmas for us. The sun came slowly over Old Donats Mountain in the southeast, behind a grey sky and shining feebly. It was a relief not to have too much light on such a white world.

Looking out of the front windows one saw the tall maples along the street in their winter dress, or undress —that undress which so wonderfully reveals their outlines and gives us such an idea of their individuality.

The children were astir early. The cats, who have a private exit from their warm cellar, were howling at the kitchen door. Coming in they felt so

good that the aged "mother kitty" arched her back and leaped over the "blue kitten." The blue kitten started a purring that could be heard in the next room. The children were spinning tops and opening all kinds of packages. Breakfast over, we elders forgot coal and ashes and started a game of ring toss such as we usually play on shipboard. Then there was a trip up the hill to the other house, with more nephews and nieces, a Christmas tree, stockings, and another Yule log. What I like about this house on the hill, next to the cheer within, is the lovely view without and also from the window inside. The house looks down on the village and across the valley to Old Donats, the mountain on the south. One can see off in the distance the state road to Albany, and also the railroad with trains leaving their snowy trails of steam behind them as they rush up and down the valley. After the hubbub of presents and the excited talk of the children it is restful to pace up and down on this porch from which one can look for many miles.

The great event of the day is the Christmas dinner in the old home. This year a plan had been made to make me do half of the carving, by having two ten pound turkeys. Instead the fortunes of marketing brought us one twenty-two pound bird, not this season's turkey, but a year old—the kind that can be ruined in cooking. Instead it came on, after four hours in the oven, tender and juicy. Backing it up were onions and mashed potatoes, chestnut stuffing and cranberry sauce, giblet gravy and cream biscuits. There was no pie, but "mother's plum pudding with a wonderful sauce" made by my sister, ice cream, fruit cake, nuts, candies, and fruits. One of the things more interesting to look at than to eat was a large jar of pickles brought from the Philippine Islands, made out of vegetables carved into the shapes of flowers, fishes, Spanish letters, etc. It took the

man who carved them all of one day to put them into the can in the correct positions.

Five of the younger ones sat at a small table, ten elders at the big table. There were no accidents except one second of plum pudding dropped on the floor by an over-enthusiastic nephew as he tried to help with the serving. One sister-in-law was sick from a long motor trip. Some we wanted were not there. But it was a peaceful dinner—with many happy reminiscences, keen enjoyment of the food, the Christmas spirit with us.

One can never tell how much of such an experience is objective and how much is subjective. Was it really a more peaceful day than for some years, or was I more glad to be home and more at peace within?

There were good helpers for the day—cook and assistant cook, a professor's wife and a colored girl who had come up in the car from Washington with the Colonel's lady. Part of our sense of freedom of course came from such competent help. But had I been host or hostess of course I should not have been quite so care-free. Those who take the brunt of these reunions may never realize how great a service they render in promoting good-will and keeping large families united.

The weather after the colder days seemed mild. The air of the hills was deliciously dry. We had some good walks before night.

We did not read the Christmas Carol as we do often, but I had with me Dickens's letter to Foster, written in 1846, from which I read:

"Many merry Christmases, many happy new years, unbroken friendship, great accumulation of cheerful recollections, affections on earth, and heaven at last for all of us."

Christmas Day, 1929.